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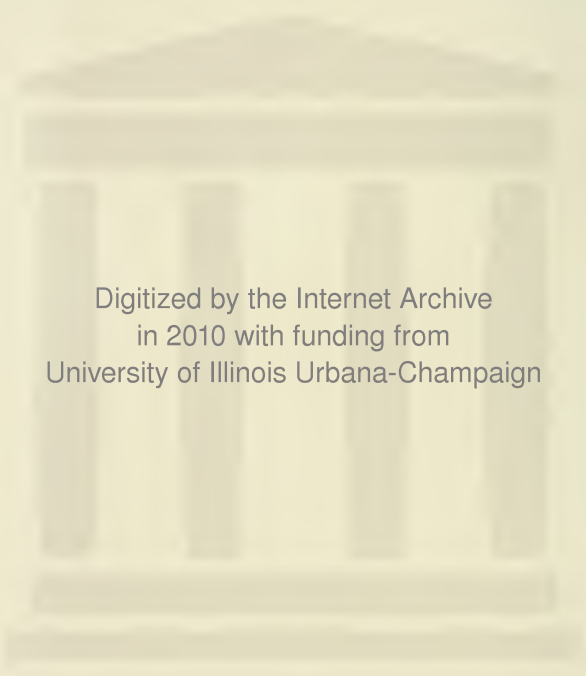
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MR. WYNWARD'S WARD.

BY

HOLME LEE.

AUTHOR OF "SYLVAN HOLT'S DAUGHTER," "ANNIS
WARLEIGH'S FORTUNES," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MR. WYNARD'S WARD.

PART II.—*continued.*

MR. WYNYARD'S WARD.

III.

WAITING FOR NEWS.

AND how had it really fared all this time with Mr. Tindal? Neither so ill nor so well as Pennie's fancy had set her on dreaming. He had achieved no honours, and had run no risks worth speaking of. Both, if ever, were yet to come. A few days after the landing of the English at Varna in June, George Goodwin fell in with him, a sun-burnt, weather-beaten, wild figure of a man, who knew the country and the people, was a capital rider, and a dead shot with the rifle. He had fraternized with some French officers, and appeared to be a mighty favourite in their camp.

“He seems a pleasant, generous, easy-going fellow enough, not a bit like a man who ought to feel a halter round his neck,” George wrote to his sister-in-law. “I should not object to go through a campaign with him. He is brave and cheerful, he sings a good song, and has some prime tobacco. I do not suppose his story is known here. Bangham, who told me, is still at Scutari with the staff. If Tindal goes in for the war as a volunteer, he will probably join the French. Should his antecedents come out, some of our fellows might fight shy of him, and that would not be encouraging. I shall keep his counsel, for I am sure a man with his face and his voice cannot be a villain. If he has come out here to redeem his fame, all I can say is, I hope he may get the chance.”

It was no more than kind of Lady Goodwin to write a little version of George's news to Pennie by-and-by. It came to her like refreshing dew in a dry and thirsty land where no water was. She had returned to Eskdale just at the beginning of hay-harvest, and her mother had immediately desired her presence at Mayfield. Pennie exchanged the dull

refined quiet of Eastwold for the bustle of the farm reluctantly. Nothing had happened to cheer her since she came home. Mrs. Wynyard had tacitly declined any conversation about Mr. Tindal, and Mrs. Croft seemed to be following the same cue. One morning Pennie rode to Allan Bridge in the hope of seeing Doctor Grey, but Mr. Buckhurst assured her the old man was too feeble to see any one, and begged her to wait until he had recovered his strength. As she was returning disappointed to Mayfield, she met Mr. Hargrove. He would have been willing to talk if she had been willing to listen ; but her ancient dislike had grown into the keenest repulsion, and it was all she could bring herself to do to return his bow. He understood her sentiments, and passed forward with an odious triumphant grin lighting up his big red face, and a menacing thought in his mind that he “ would be even with scornful Miss Penelope yet.”

The first drop of comfort Pennie got, came therefore in Lady Goodwin’s letter, and she thanked and blessed her for it like a creature that had been perishing of drought. Pennie was not much given to

tears, but that night, in her little white dimity chamber, she had a good long crying fit, and when she fell asleep exhausted, she had a dream. Some antique superstitions survived in Eskdale, and amongst others, a certain faith in dreams from which Pennie was not quite free. When she awoke it was high morning, and she tried to recall her scattered vision which had left her with a lively sense of buoyant exhilaration.

It would only come back in fragments. First, she saw Rood Abbey garden in the hot afternoon sunshine, and heard the sound of an axe in the stillness chopping down trees. Then she heard a babble and prattle which was sometimes children laughing, and then grown people disputing, and just before she woke, she saw Mr. Tindal coming up the lawn waving his right hand. And he was waving it to her. That was what had made her feel so strangely glad at heart. He looked like himself, yet unlike; for his gesture was expressive of triumph and joy. She had never seen him in the flesh wear that jubilant countenance, but she could imagine it. "And," said she to herself, "one day I shall see it.

It is of good augury. That garden-scene I shall see with my bodily eyes before I come to die." She felt so uplifted that she could almost have sung for happiness. The sensation did not endure, but while it lasted it was as vivid as if she had laid hold of a real and palpable joy.

When she appeared at breakfast, her mother asked what ailed her that she looked so bonnie. Pennie replied that she had had a comfortable dream.

"That is more than I can say for myself," sighed the widow. "I've been sadly bothered down in the Five-Acre without my shoes and stockings—and that means poverty. The crops are safe to be light anyhow, and if the weather should be bad, it will be a ruinous harvest. Then I'd got a lapful o' little silver coins that I couldn't count—small coins is no good, and to dream of copper-money is nothing worth. I dreamt once, when I was a lass, that my father gave me a Queen Anne's guinea, and that very night, if he didn't bring me home from Norminster, where he'd gone to Thursday market, the prettiest mode silk cloak that was to be seen in Eskdale all that summer. I had it when I married poor Croft,

and the last bit of it I made into a hood for you, Pennie, when he was dead and gone. Black silks was good in them days, and wore to look handsome to the last thread of 'em."

"That is all old folks' cry, mother; the things they had when they were young were always best."

"It is so, Pennie, love. You'll tell your own children the same, if the Lord sends you any, and you live to see 'em grow up, and your own head grow grey. But tell me what you've been dreaming that's put such light in your face, that you look cheerfuller than you've done since you came home."

Pennie recounted her broken vision. The widow grew meditative on it.

"It may mean good, and it mayn't," said she oracularly, by-and-by. "Sunshine—that's luck and prosperity. Afternoon—that's getting on in the day: it is nearly noon with you now, Pennie. Cutting down trees—that I'm not clear about. It don't look well to be cutting down trees in Eskdale. What sort was they, love?"

Pennie could not say. The trees were not conspicuous, only she heard the chop of the axe, and

supposed it meant cutting down. The widow began musingly to call over the signification of oaks, elms, ashes, alders, cherry-trees ; and Pennie let her talk on without interruption until the old post-woman's voice in the kitchen announced the arrival of *The Times*—the event of the day to her now, and for many a month to come.

In that morning's news mention was made of a variety of interesting matters, none of them very painful. Mrs. Croft had forbidden Pennie to tease her with anything that was distressing ; but amusing bits she had permission to read aloud. A visit of Omar Pasha to the English camp, a review of the cavalry to entertain him, a description of Bashi-Bazouks, she listened to indifferently ; but when Pennie came to the commissariat arrangements, and quoted " rations of good tough beef, and good energetic biscuit," the hospitable soul grew deeply attentive.

" Good tough beef, and good energetic biscuit ! " echoed she. " The Lord provide 'em good energetic teeth to tussle wi' it."

An allusion to a crock of butter (only seen, not

tasted), touched her tenderly. "Poor fellow, I wish in my heart, he had some o' my Saturday's churning. I never saw butter come more beautiful—five pounds and three quarters of it. Go on, Pennie love, if there is any more about how they feed the soldiers."

There was not much more ; only a line or two descriptive of a guardsman riding along the road with a lamb at his saddle-bow, and a brace of geese dangling over his holsters ; and then a brief mention of the Light Division as looking like Highland caterans, when they returned from a foraging expedition, driving flocks and herds before them into the camp.

"Then ragged robins they are," laughed the widow. "Tell that to your cousin Dick ! It will cure him, may-be, of the martial fit he's taken in his head since Jessie has been forbid him. Silly fellow to want to marry such a feckless lass. If that's all, Pennie, I'll go, and be seeing after Bessie i' the kitchen. There's cheese-cakes to make, and remember what I said about your aunt Lister and the gels coming in to tea."

With that, exit Mrs. Croft, and Pennie resumed her perusal of the newspaper.

There was no change at Mayfield. Pennie felt that evening as if she had not been an hour away. Her aunt Lister, Joanna, and Lucy arrived between four and five o'clock; the matron sumptuous in Waterloo-blue satin turk, the maidens clean and stiff in pink muslins fresh from the ironing-board. Pennie had on a china silk dress made in Paris; buff, embroidered with white. Her cousins admired it as modish, and becoming besides.

“Yes,” said her aunt, “that cheesy colour carries off a brown skin better nor anything. I could fancy you’d growed, Pennie, but it may be it is only that skirts is worn longer in France than here. For my own wear, I like a skirt that I can step clear away in over the ground; and I never allows my gels to go draggle-tailed.”

“And you’ll never see my Pennie go draggle-tailed,” interposed Mrs. Croft, warmly. “If there ever was a lass particular to be without speck or spot or any such thing it is her. Neatest little lass, she is, that I know. But I won’t say that she isn’t extravagant wi’ so many pairs o’ fine thread an’ silk stockings in the wash every fortnight, and her cam-

bric frills, edged wi' Valenceens, that is out of sight, is clearer than my best company handkerchers."

"No praise to her making a god of her perishable body," returned Aunt Lister with sour piety. "Calico's good enough wear for my lasses and me till we puts on the long flannel shroud all of us must go to our long homes in."

"Don't talk like that, mother: who's going to die?" exclaimed Joanna, testily. "When I'm my own missis, I'll wear linen, and I'll have edging, though it does take a sight of getting-up."

"Wait till you *are* your own missis, Joanna; I see no likelihoods of it at present," replied Mrs. Lister. "And it isn't many husbands you'll find to be liberaler than your own father, I can tell you that, miss."

Joanna tossed her head significantly, and Mrs. Croft suggested that Lucy would be getting off first, may be. Lucy giggled, and said she didn't expect it. "Nor me ayther," added her mother. "Lucy looks over high. Gaskill's a good-natured fellow, and will make Joanna no doubt comfortable, but her father and me would like to see him settled on a bigger farm. It's a poor house and poor land that

he has from Squire Curtis. I wish there was a place hereabouts to let that I could have an' eye to her a bit at first. Gels is so heedless often."

And so the old talk went the old round—from dress to marrying, from marrying to marketing, from marketing to money; to and fro, hither and thither, in all the doubles and twists and turns and winds of rural feminine gossip. Pennie stifled her inclination to yawn repeatedly, and tried to bear her part in the dull personal chat with some little appearance of interest. But long before nine o'clock came, and her mother's visitors took their departure, she had lapsed into silent weariness and abstraction. They went away, persuaded in their own minds that she was fretting after Mr. Tindal.

"Poor little lass! I'm sorry for her," said her aunt Lister, as she turned with her daughters into the fields near Rood; "it is a sore heart anybody may have that has a son at the war."

Joanna and Lucy glanced askance at their mother and at each other. By that slip of the tongue, that naming of a *son* for a *lover*, they knew that in commiserating Pennie, she had a closer thought for an

old grief of her own. For there had been once at the Grange another son besides Dick, an elder son, Tom, a reckless, handsome lad who scandalized its proprieties by his wild life, and wound it up by taking a glass over much one Saturday at Norminster Market, and enlisting for a soldier in the dull, unadventurous season of peace.

His father had refused to buy him off. "Nay," replied he to the petition that he would, "I'll wear none of my brass in paying forfeit for such a ne'er-do-weel. He shall sup as he has brewed, for me."

His mother stood by her husband, and Tom being a straight-made young fellow with a good seat on horseback, was drafted into a dragoon regiment, then stationed in Dublin, and no more was heard of him in Eskdale. His name was forbidden to be mentioned at the Grange; for he was considered to have quite disgraced his family. But the lad had pride, and took to his trade of soldiering with a spirit that showed he did not mean to disgrace himself, and when the war broke out, there was not a better or more popular soldier in his troop than Tom Lister. His own people, however, had not forgiven him,

though seven years had elapsed ; and when he wrote a line to his mother to say that his regiment was ordered for foreign service, and he could have a short leave, if his father would let him come home, he did not get the desired permission. Both father and mother had since secretly repented, and had promised each other that if he behaved himself well *out there*, *then* they would buy him his discharge, and set him going on some little farm for himself. “Not *here* ; Dick has been brought up to expect to follow me at the Grange, and he has been a good lad,” said the father with a stern sense of justice. “But if all’s well presently, I’ll do something for Tom—he’s the eldest.”

Dick Lister came up to Mayfield the next morning, and after a little chat, asked his cousin Pennie what was the news in *The Times*. “Mother doesn’t say a deal, but she is main troubled about Tom,” explained he. “*Norminster Gazette* comes only once a week, and my father’s not for having a daily paper. It’s enough she should lose her head one day in seven, he tells her. Do you remember Tom, Pennie ?”

"I only remember him holding me up once to pick cherries in the big tree in your front garden, and his always calling me a 'black bod!'"

"Poor old Tom! He was a good-natured chap. He gave me a rare good welting one afternoon for meddling with some wires he'd set down in t' low croft; but next day he brought me a whip with a whistle in it from Norminster to make up. I wish he'd been let come home to say good-by before he went out there. What with cholera, and what with short rations, mother begins to think it's much if ever he comes back."

"Oh, Dick, I hope he will. I hope he'll come back so that we shall all be proud of him," cried Pennie.

"You reckon yourself one amongst us then, Pennie, do you? That's right. Am I to carry t' *Times* to mother for an hour? You shall be sure to get it back. I'll bring it myself."

Pennie was glad to oblige her aunt; and she had her reward, for when Dick returned with the newspaper, he told her that they had had a letter at the Abbey from Mr. Tindal that morning. He had just

met the steward, who had given him the intelligence.

Pennie coloured up. "Good news, Dick?" said she.

"Yes; he seems all right and in spirits. They are to send him out brandy, quinine, tobacco, and a cheap novel or two, and to tell him what is doing in Eskdale. He is at Varna, where our Tom is; he's seen him, and sends a message to mother that has comforted her above a bit. He's a kind heart, Mr. Tindal, Pennie, let them say to the contrary that will."

"What's that about Mr. Tindal?" asked Mrs. Croft, entering at the moment. Dick repeated his tale. The widow happened to be in a soft mood, and though she shook her head at Pennie, and sighed, and said she was a wilful, wilful lass, she did not reprove Dick for bringing her comfortable tidings, or forbid him to bring any more. This was a great gain to Pennie. Whatever news came to the Abbey, she could trust Dick to give her henceforward, and could receive without any violation of lawful commands. Supported by this confidence, she returned

to Eastwold about the middle of July, in far better and brighter spirits than she had gone to Mayfield a month before.

The harvest moon waxed over the ripening corn-fields, and waned over the stubble. The mountain-ash berries crimsoned, the purple moors faded into sear, while the allied armies were wasting at Varna, and all the world at home was either grieving for those already lost, or looking anxiously for what was next to come. Pennie now often took her ride round by the Grange to carry her aunt *The Times*, and a friendly understanding had grown up between them from their common ground of interest. Hardly a morning passed, after the news came that the armies had landed in the Crimea, which did not see her turn her horse's head towards Rood, with the paper stuck in the pocket of her saddle. It was a daily something to do, which seemed to put on the weariness of her own waiting. Weather was no hindrance to her—and the weather in Eskdale that autumn was very wild and wet. Many a time the shepherds met her on the moor, when the wind whistled so shrill

and sharp, and the rain pelted so hard and keen, that they were glad to throw an old sack over their head and shoulders for protection. Pennie had a certain pleasure in confronting a storm, a sense of battle and defiance, which braced and did her good ; and Mrs. Wynyard, after several useless remonstrances, let her do as she pleased.

But there came a day at last when Pennie would fain have foregone her mission to the Grange—the day that brought the news of the battle of Balaclava. Tom had come scathless out of the battle of the Alma ; but here he fell, one of the band of heroes, famous to all time, who took part in the glorious charge of the Light Cavalry Brigade. She read the story : they all read it at Eastwold, and the long roll of the dead, wounded, and missing—his name in the first list, amongst the common men. Bad news flies swiftly ; and she thought it might, perhaps, have come to the family at the Grange from some other quarter. On this plea, she delayed her ride for an hour or two ; but presently her heart misgave her. She had thus far been always the bearer of their earliest intelligence, so she ordered her horse and

went. It was a dull, drizzling November day, with a sullen mist hanging about the hills, and a white rolling fog marking the windings of the river in the hollow of the dale. Between Eastwold and the Abbey she did not meet a soul, and the moment she entered the familiar parlour at the Grange, she felt they had not heard.

Mr. Lister was smoking his after-dinner pipe ; his wife had her basket of linen on the table to begin to mend after the last wash. Joanna and Lucy were sitting close by the window, busy with their needles already. Dick was not there ; he had gone to Allan Bridge to see about getting some harness mended, his mother said.

“ I wonder I did not fall in with him,” remarked Pennie.

“ We'd given you up for to-day—it had got so late. There's news from the war again, is there niece ? ”

Pennie stood with her back to the light, the paper in her hand. “ Yes, aunt ; there's been another great battle, and the Light Cavalry, that Tom belonged to, made such a magnificent charge as was never read of

in history before. I have been saying to myself as I rode along, that if Mr. Tindal had fallen in it, my pride in his honour would have almost consoled me for the loss of my love."

"I know—our Tom's killed!" said the mother, in a quick, low voice, looking in her husband's face. He trembled, knocked the ash gently out of his pipe, leant it up in the chimney-corner, and turned his eyes inquiringly on Pennie.

"It is true, uncle. Tom's name is in the list of the dead—many a soldier might envy him such a death."

The two girls came forward, listening, wide-eyed, but silent. It was a very silent scene. The mother was the first to speak again. "It has been very good of you, niece, I'm sure, to come over as you've done, rain or fair, to bring us news," said she. "This 'ull be your last journey on that errand. What day was it?"

"The twenty-fifth of October."

"It was his birth-day. He'd be seven-and-twenty years of age, father; he was my eldest bairn. We said we'd call him Thomas, if it was a lad, and

we did ; but he was always *Tom* from the day he began to run alone. You'll leave us the paper, Pennie ; Dick will like to read it at night. Nay, lass, not now ; I have heard enough—he's *dead*."

There was not a sob—not a tear. He had been so long away. Yet in that strained quietness, Pennie somehow felt that there was an anguish of regret wringing the father's and mother's heart for what was irrevocably past. They would not show it to her, perhaps would never show it to any human eye, but the sting of their alienated son's death lay not in his loss so much as in the remembrance of the repulse they had given to his prayer for reconciliation. And now he was gone beyond the reach or the need of it. While the world was shouting honour on him and his fellows, he was their unforgiven prodigal of whose glory they had no right to be proud. And how proud they would have been of him and of it if they had only bidden him go in peace !

As Pennie was riding home again she met Dick returning from Allan Bridge. He had heard the news from Mr. Hargrove, and looked sadly grieved. "I'd begun to reckon on his coming back, and

taking to his place again as eldest son, and then, I thought, they'd not mind so much about Jessie and me," said the young man disconsolately. "Poor old Tom! it was a grand charge that, Cousin Pennie—a grand thing to do—it was *discipline*, as Hargrove said—discipline. Well, I must be wishing you good-day—father and mother will be cut up dreadfully, and I'd better be getting home to 'em."

So he went on his way, and Pennie on hers, and the dreary November afternoon, darkened into a stormy night.

This was the night before the dense grey morning, under cover of which the Russians stole up the heights and attacked the English position at Inkermann. Here, by the Sandbag Battery, fell brave George Goodwin, pierced by many wounds. Pennie's eyes filled with tears when she saw his familiar name in the list, and remembered how kind and merry the poor young fellow used to be. She wrote to Lady Goodwin and Sir Andrew to express her sympathy in their sorrow. Lady Goodwin laid the letter down, saying,—“She is very happy—she did not care for him; not *really*. I was disappointed then,

but it is all for the best now." Sir Andrew mournfully agreed with her.

Where was there not mourning that terrible winter? Mourning, or anxious dread of a blow? As the days shortened, and the long lamp-lit evenings set-in, the dismal Crimean story, splendidly lightened hitherto with blazes of glorious victory, was drawn out into one grim, tedious, miserable tragedy. Pennie spent the Christmas at Mayfield, busy all day with needle and thread, as she, and thousands besides, had been busy for weeks making up warm clothing and comforts to be sent out to the suffering soldiers. Her mother had almost laid an interdict on *The Times*; she said the sight of the pictures it drew haunted her dreams.

"If there is no help for it, why do they break one's heart by telling us such cruel things?" said she. "But there *would* be help for it, if rogues, and lazy, stupid hounds were not so thick where they shouldn't be. I wish I had my will o' those knavish cobblers that dare to make rotten boots for the poor soldiers; every man jack of 'em should see the inside o' Northallerton gaol, and tread a hundred pair

of 'em out on the mill !” But the widow’s hospitable heart grieved most for the empty stomachs of the neglected heroes. “ To send 'em out, poor lads, scant o’ clothing, to live in the open, without fuel to make a bit o’ fire, without a roof to cover 'em, and to feed and physic 'em so ill that they’re dying like flies ! Oh ! it’s shame, shame, shame to us all ! Why doesn’t the Queen turn off her servants that serves her so badly ? There’s no management or foresight among 'em. They’re not worth their salt, and that’s the truth ! ”

What the indignant widow said, all Eskdale said, and all England. Mrs. Lister smoothed down absently the rich crape she wore for Tom, and declared in her cold strained voice to her friends that it was a mercy he had been taken. “ At all events it is something to think of that he died like a soldier—as a soldier should expect to die—and not like a dog. If we’d had to think of him perished wi’ cold and pined wi’ hunger, it would ha’ got the master’s life, as surely as it would ha’ taken away my senses. War’s not a summer-day game, that we know, but if Wellington had been among 'em would things be in the muddle

they are? The old Duke's gone, but he *was* a commander. He saved his soldiers as well as he handled 'em in the day of battle, and that's surely a general's duty. They're throwing 'em away now like smoke. The flower o' the army's dwined away.'

There were, during these terrible months, long intervals between Mr. Tindal's letters, one interval so long from the close of January to the beginning of April, that Pennie grew quite heart-sick, waiting for news. Mrs. Wynyard would fain have had her leave Eskdale for a time, and divert her mind by change of scene; but no urging could persuade her to stir out of sight and reach of the Abbey. She spent her time almost equally between Eastwold and Mayfield, riding every day, and plying her needle diligently between whiles. When she was at Eastwold she helped to teach Lois her lessons, and to keep the boys amused if they were at home; but the days, as they lengthened, felt more weary—almost more weary than she could bear.

During Mr. Tindal's absence, his steward, Mr. Roberts, had taken up his abode at the Abbey by his master's request, and it was to him that all letters

were addressed. Pennie encountered him frequently in her rides, and though there had been no introduction, there was a tacit understanding between them, and a bowing acquaintance which presently ripened into a speaking acquaintance. The steward treated the young lady with very solemn observance and respect ; never mentioned her name without honourable praise, and was known to regard her as future mistress at Rood. He was well acquainted with all the circumstances of her engagement to his unfortunate master, of whose innocence he was as fully persuaded as herself. He was also well acquainted with the circumstances of Mr. Hargrove's interference, and though formerly friends, a coolness had of late arisen between them on this account, and on others more or less connected with it. Mr. Roberts, like Dr. Grey, had discovered a discrepancy between the past and present views of the lawyer concerning the Rood tragedy ; and though he could discern no adequate motive for the change, it had inspired him with a feeling of distrust.

It was while riding one mild April day in disconsolate mood across the moor towards Arkindale that

Pennie got news again of Mr. Tindal. Mr. Roberts, mounted on a rough roadster, overtook her there, pulled up, bowed and said : “ You’ll be glad to know, Miss, that there was a letter from my master to-day, and a letter for you enclosed which I have left, as he bade me, down at Mayfield, in your mother’s care. Mr. Tindal has been laid up in hospital of a wound that he got in a *sortie*, on the French lines, in the beginning of February ; he was for weeks delirious, but he’s about again now, and doing well, praised be God ! ” The steward spoke, touched his hat, and rode forward in haste, hearing only a breathless, “ Thank you—oh, thank you ! ” from Pennie, which sounded as if it came from her heart. She immediately turned her pony’s head, and intimating to her antiquated attendant, Crabtree, that it was her good pleasure to go down to Mayfield, set off at a canter towards a steep, rough sheep-track, which, winding down the fell, would bring her by a short cut, but a by no means very easy one, to her mother’s house. Crabtree shouted after her in vain not to go by that “ break-neck road ; ” she only shouted back, “ You go by the Low Rood Lane, and meet me between

Mayfield and the Parsonage. I shall go this way."

And she went, for a miracle, as he said, safely.

Just at the garden door, she encountered Mr. Hargrove coming out. He started when he saw her, but she was too full of her own eager, palpitating impatience to observe anything beyond the fact that he had passed. Old Jacob came hobbling up to take her pony, and dropping from her saddle, she ran indoors, her habit gathered over her left arm, her little whip clutched in her right hand, crying, "Mother, mother, where are you?"

The door of the dining-parlour stood open, and on the hearth was Mrs. Croft, looking extraordinarily confused, vexed, and guilty. "Why, Pennie love, I little expected to see you this afternoon," said she.

Pennie kissed her. "My letter, mother, give me my letter," was all she could reply. She was quite over-wrought, her face had paled to the lips; there was a fluttering at her heart, a strange reeling darkness before her eyes.

"What letter? I have no letter."

"The letter that Mr. Roberts left with you for me."

"Don't let us have any nonsense, Pennie. It

was from Mr. Tindal, and did you expect I should give it you? Not so! Your guardians have forbid any correspondence, and I have forbid it. Mr. Hargrove happened to come in as it was lying on the table there, and he said the best thing I could do was to put it in the fire, and burn it. And I took his advice."

The next moment, the widow wished to heaven she had not. The darkness that Pennie felt went round whirling, the ground seemed to slip away under her feet, and for the first time in her life she sank down in a fainting fit. Her mother was terribly alarmed. She called for "Bessie, Bessie!" in a voice that brought the damsel running from the kitchen in a fright, and when she saw Pennie on the floor, and her mother kneeling by her, fumbling at her habit to give her air, she thought that nothing less than death was the matter, and fell to wringing her hands and crying aloud.

"Don't stand there helpless, but bring a can of water from the pump," said the widow, her fear and compunction taking the tone of anger. Bessie promptly obeyed; and the old remedy being applied

in the vigorous old way, Pennie presently opened her eyes again, drew a long breath, and felt very wet and uncomfortable.

“You’ll be better now, Pennie love; you’ve over-tired yourself, that’s what you’ve done,” said her mother, eager after self-exculpation. “You ride too far by half—one would think you fancied yourself made of bend-leather. I must speak to Mrs. Wynyard about it; it won’t do to have you knocking yourself up like this. I never knew you do such a fond thing as faint before. If I was you I’d leave fainting to fine ladies. How are you feeling yourself now?”

“Don’t let Jacob put up my pony, I am not going to stay,” replied Pennie, with trembling fingers beginning to re-fasten her habit at the throat, and turning her face to the open window to let the vivifying air blow upon her.

Her mother burst into a remonstrance to which she made no answer—of which, indeed, she heard not a word. She was thinking: “My letter, my letter, my letter!” as some thirsty little animal might think of a long-sought water-fount that it

had found run dry in the burning drought of August. When Mrs. Croft discerned the effect of her act, she repented; but, as usual, with a wrath which overflowed in harsh and angry reproaches. Pennie heeded them no more than her remonstrance. In the midst of the clamour she turned round, and offered her parting kiss; and when her mother's voice broke, at that, into a sob, she only said:—

“It is of no use crying, mother. But you know how all these months I have been longing to hear,”—and then Pennie's own lips quivered, her voice dropt, and she pulled her veil over her face to hide the scalding tears that would come in spite of her.

“Have a glass of wine to strengthen you for your ride,” said the widow. “*Do* now—to please me, Pennie.”

Pennie took the potion, and then went her way without more words—but, oh, how cruelly hurt, how cruelly disappointed! Crabtree rejoined her close at home, and slowly she rode back to Rood, weeping, poor little soul, all the way, and dwelling with the

fonder affection on Mr. Tindal's memory, because everybody else who was most bound to love and protect her seemed so unkind. But her mother never would have burnt her letter if that *man*, that *odious* Mr. Hargrove had not suggested the barbarous deed—she was sure of it.

While this thought was working in her mind, she met Mr. Roberts again, and in a few brief sentences which the steward knew she uttered with considerable difficulty, she told him the fate of her letter and the cause of it.

“Hargrove goes out of his way to do a mischief, I must needs say,” was his reply; “but, at all events, miss, you have the comfort of knowing that master's safe and well; and I'll mention it to him this afternoon when I'm writing.” Which he did, with one or two little incidents of his own observation that made Mr. Tindal's heart yearn with passion and pity to his dear little Pennie, and set him to work on the instant upon another letter, longer, sweeter, in every way better than that of which she had been deprived. And this he addressed to herself at Eastwold, and made a journey to put it in the

surest and swiftest way of getting to England, in those times of interrupted and irregular posts.

But before it could come to her hand, there was many a heavy hour to wear through which the sense of ill-usage embittered. Even Mrs. Wynyard could not justify the burning of the letter, and Dr. Grey, to whom Pennie communicated it in person, was indignant in a helpless, fruitless way. The easy good old man had now and then a favourable interval during which his friends were admitted for a chat, and in the course of the winter Pennie had several times had opportunities of opening her mind to him. On this occasion she did it without the smallest reserve.

“You are no longer able to defend me,” said she. “Mr. Hargrove is virtually my sole guardian, and actually my persecutor. I am turned twenty: if I only knew how to set about it, I would far rather be a ward in Chancery now than continue at his mercy. My mother is completely under his influence; with Mr. Wynyard he carries everything his own way, and Mrs. Wynyard is plainly afraid of him, and distrustful too. I am sick of being told to wait

and be patient, and see how things go on, when in my own mind I am convinced they are going wrong."

The doctor's wits were much shaken since his paralytic seizure. He first said Hargrove was a sly villain and a crafty knave, and then he tried to soothe Pennie's suspicions; bade her not add to the burthen of Mr. Wynyard's troubles by forcing her own on him, and before she did anything, advised her to talk to her uncle Lister, and hear what he thought.

"It will be of no use: my uncle Lister always declines to discuss my affairs, and appears to feel a lively delight in anticipating a grand revelation of muddle and fraud when they come to be investigated at my majority."

"Let us hope things won't be quite so bad as that, Miss Pennie," replied the old man. "You may be a check on Hargrove yourself if you don't mind speaking out. I can give you a list descriptive of the securities in which your fortune is invested. Hargrove said it should be made out clear enough for a lady's comprehension, by way of taunting me—I'm ashamed to say I never tested it by a comparison

with your deeds and documents that are in his possession, but, as he expected I should, no doubt it is correct. Give me my desk, my dear; it is there."

The doctor unlocked this receptacle, and handed the list to Pennie, who accepted it in the full intention of using it, as he advised her. "Read it carefully over at home, and then go to him in my name, and require him to show you that all the parchments and papers mentioned in it are safe. Do not be content with an assurance, and do not be put off with an excuse. Insist on seeing them with your own eyes, and handling them with your own hands."

"I will," said Pennie. "I am not in the least afraid of him."

Two or three days after, Pennie was as good as her word. Taking Francis Wynyard with her, she presented herself at the lawyer's office, and mentioned the errand on which she was come. Mr. Hargrove professed to be very much engaged, and wished her to come again in the afternoon; but she declined, and on that he said his clerk could attend

to her business as well as himself. He then directed that respectable functionary to carry into his private office from the strong-room the Croft Ward box, and to show to the young lady what she desired to see. His manner was a mixture of insolence and uneasiness; but Pennie, though her sensations were uncomfortable, was not to be turned from her purpose by a sneer.

Francis Wynyard had an obvious, boyish shame of the mission they were come upon. He did not like Mr. Hargrove, but his distrust fell far short of Pennie's. It was an immense relief to him when she said her task was accomplished, and she was ready to go. As she passed through the outer office where Mr. Hargrove sat, he asked her if she was perfectly satisfied with the result of her researches.

"If the deeds I have seen are the originals, they tally with the list," said she.

"What else could they be but the originals, Miss Penelope, may I ask?"

"Duplicates—cleverly forged."

Mr. Hargrove dropped his pen, half stooped to pick it up, and raised himself without achieving his

intention, his red face much the redder for the momentary effort. "So they might—that did not occur to me," replied he, with a peculiar smile. "You young ladies of the present day are so up to the tricks of this wicked world."

Pennie declined to be put out of countenance. "There was," said she, "lately a case of that kind in *The Times*, and several articles upon it which made it plain to even my capacity. Whether those deeds are or are not the originals, I am unable to judge, but I hope they are, for everybody's sake. I make it no secret, Mr. Hargrove, that I distrust you,—distrust your honesty, distrust your truth, distrust you in every way. I shall rejoice exceedingly when it is in my power to sever your connection with my affairs."

Mr. Hargrove bowed with solemn deference, and Pennie departed, not unthankful that courage had been vouchsafed her to speak her mind without faltering. Nature, for once, had come out in her stronger than training, and when she was gone, the lawyer, laughing to himself at the bluntness which thought to over-match his craft, said how like she

was to her old grandfather Lister, the shrewdest, most downright of the last generation of Eskdale yeomen.

Mrs. Wynyard was displeased with Pennie's proceedings; her mother professed herself both ashamed and vexed, and Mr. Hargrove's communication to his luckless employer brought her a very severe letter from Dieppe, in which her conduct was stigmatized as altogether wrong, unladylike, and foolish.

"I don't care," said Pennie, though she was, in fact, a little stung. "I think you must all be in a conspiracy to make roguery easy!"

Her mother, to whom she addressed this remark, assured her in reply that she was a wilful, silly, headstrong lass, so bigoted to Mr. Tindal that she was ready to believe everybody her enemy who came between him and her, though they were in reality her best friends. Pennie contented herself with devoutly wishing two more years were gone; and receiving just at the moment a letter from Mrs. Forrester, with an invitation to Brackenfield Lodge, she accepted it without a second thought, and escaped for a little while the irksome presence of her many disapprovers.

IV.

LETTERS FROM THE EAST.

THE Lodge, which at Pennie's Christmas visit to Brackenfield was so forlorn and neglected, had on now the pleasant, May-time aspect of an English home. She and Mrs. Forrester held many an hour's familiar talk sitting on the sunny terrace where the early roses were coming out, and the leafage was all young and tender green. And one day Pennie told her friend all her troubles with some expectation of finding sympathy, but she only came again into collision with the common prejudice, the breadth and depth of which she had perhaps hardly yet learnt to appreciate.

“Since the rumour of your obstinate attachment got abroad, we have often heard the question of Mr. Tindal's guilt or innocence debated,” said Mrs.

Forrester. "It seems to all of us here that unless confession should come from some unknown quarter, that he must lie under the terrible imputation to the day of his death."

"You none of you ever knew him, or you *could* not have believed it," replied Pennie, earnestly.

"He was very slightly known to us here, that is true; but he was intimate enough at Methley Towers, and there he was condemned. Lady Brooke thanks heaven for her escape."

Pennie's naughty little upper lip took a contemptuous curl: "Lady Brooke," said she, "knew him less than anybody, and though he was in love with her, he knew her as little."

Mrs. Forrester laughed: "Plain-spoken as ever, Pennie! You are a sociable little creature; do you ever try to realize what your life may be if you link your fate with his—cut off from the every-day, easy-going world which will not receive him?"

"I never tried to realize it, and I do not believe it will be. But if I were assured that it must, I would rather spend the rest of my days on a desert island with him, than be made welcome without him

to all the delights of the world. Now, Millicent, you have my confession of faith."

"You are an enthusiastic little goose. I should like to see again the hero who has inspired you with such a profound devotion. You have quite taken me by surprise, Pennie. I used to think you would never fall in love on your own account. Tell me how it came about."

"I shall not. And Mr. Tindal is not a hero." Pennie seemed rather piqued.

"I did not mean to imply that nobody would ever fall in love with *you*, Quixote," replied her friend with a teasing, caressing air. "I can perfectly well imagine how Mr. Tindal took to you, but I cannot comprehend how your practical, common-sense little wise-head, as Uncle Christopher calls it, got over all the reasons why you should not take to him."

"I did not know the reasons why until I *had* taken to him ; and when I heard them, they did not approve themselves to my judgment as reasons sufficient for changing my mind. From the first, I did not believe them—it is out of nature that I should

believe them, when I see him generous, gentle, brave, kind—oh, Milly, the kindest, best, most lovable——”

I know all about it,—there, Pennie, never mind my teasing! If you ever marry, I shall come to see you; I won’t forsake you; but I should heartily rejoice to see the clouds clear up first. Here come the letters.”

A servant drew near with four on a salver—two for Mrs. Forrester, two for Pennie.

“Only an answer from that new cook I wrote about, and an invitation to the Grandisons for Monday; who are your correspondents, Pennie—Eastwold and Mayfield?” asked Mrs. Forrester, looking over her shoulder.

Pennie was absorbed past hearing, for in her Eastwold letter was enclosed another in an unfamiliar hand. She turned it over, and then read the beginning of Mrs. Wynyard’s accompanying epistle. It apprised her that the letter forwarded was from the east. “I cannot imitate your good mother’s example, dear Pennie, and put it in the fire, but I think Mr. Tindal ought to refrain from addressing you——” Pennie read no further, but clutched her

precious treasure, and got up to make off with it to her own room. Mrs. Forrester understood the case, and held her fast, asking why she was running away, and why she was blushing to such a brilliant excess when there was positively no one to see how pretty she could look on proper provocation.

“Milly, what a torment you are !” was the slightly exasperated answer, and then at last Pennie got free and got away.

She made fast her door, and shut herself up with her letter for an hour at the least. It was a long letter, a loving, cheering, amusing letter : all that she imagined a letter from Mr. Tindal would be ; and it made up to her for her former cruel deprivation. How often did she read it ? Over and over until it occurred to her suddenly to think whether she might answer it. Then she applied to Mrs. Wynyard's letter again : but that gave her no guidance,—neither permission nor veto was even distantly referred to. While she was debating over the strong temptation to *do* and abide the consequences, Mrs. Forrester knocked at the door.

“Pennie, let me and baby in : we are growing

alarmed at your prolonged seclusion," cried she, in her teasing tone.

Pennie gave her admission, and after communicating bits of her news, sought counsel to do as she wished. Mrs. Forrester was perfectly aware of her, and would not give it; not at first, that is. It was wonderful what a faculty for tormenting this happy wife and mother had developed all at once. But there was something in Pennie that provoked everybody to jest at her who loved her; to call her odd names, and to laugh at her serious side: even Mr. Tindal had more than once testified to the influence.

"Just forget your private affairs for one minute, Pennie, and tell me if you think this a pretty pattern for baby's shoes," began her friend.

"I don't know anything about babies' shoes. Baby kicks them off, and seems more comfortable without. I argue therefore that babies' shoes are a maternal work of supererogation."

"Pennie, don't be profane. Am I to read that letter? I daresay half of it is in the newspaper."

"More than half, of course. You can read it

there; the writing is rather cramped. You could not understand it."

"Fortune must have been in a more freakish mood than common when she gave you a *rôle* in a tragedy, Pennie. Poor little soul! you always laugh now with tears in your eyes."

"I have nothing to cry about. This is nothing but good news."

"And when is he coming home? Does he mean to see Sebastopol taken, and the war ended?"

"Yes. You need not remind me, Milly—I know he is in the way of danger, in the way of death. Don't you think I might write—just a small letter? They can only threaten me with the Lord Chancellor again, and I have made up my mind that he is more reasonable than they are, and probably much tenderer. At all events, he would not act so spitefully as my present deputed guardian, Mr. Hargrove, does."

"If you are not afraid of any terrors that may overtake you, Pennie, I see nothing to hinder you from doing what you like. Mary would have kept back his letter, if she were not becoming hopeless of a change in you."

The result was that Pennie wrote : not “just a small letter,” but a letter as long, as full, and calculated to be as satisfactory to the receiver as his had been to her. She made no secret of what she had done, but mentioned it in replying to Mrs. Wynyard, and also in writing to her mother. Mr. Hargrove came very soon into possession of the fact, and he again revived the menace which had proved effectual in the first instance, and said to Mrs. Croft, that he really thought it would be advisable to make the fractious heiress a ward of the court ; lest, some day, Mr. Tindal should come back, when they would have no security that he might not persuade her to run off with him. The widow declined to fear this of her daughter.

“Nay,” said she, “Pennie has a better sense of things than that. She knows what belongs to her own credit. She will marry him in the face of us all, or she’ll never marry him. She’ll do nothing underhand ; she’s not a bit of a coward isn’t Pennie. She is so obstinate because she fancies she is behaving well to stand up for a man that’s down in the world. And I do believe her whole heart’s set

upon him ; and a lass is hard to turn when that's the case."

"She has been badly brought up," said the lawyer ; "she would have been much better brought up at home."

"I see no fault in my Pennie, begging *your* pardon, Mr. Hargrove," replied the widow stiffly, like most mothers regarding the privilege of finding flaws in her offspring as a sacred monopoly. "It is unfort'net she ever met with Mr. Tindal ; but thinking of him as she does, and feeling as she does, I can't exactly blame her for being constant. Her 'errors leans to virtue's side,' as Mrs. Fetherston says. And if it was not for that suspicion that hangs on him, I don't know a man in Eskdale or anywhere that I'd sooner give her to. He'd not separate her from me ; she'd be my daughter all the days of her life, like other folks' daughters to them. But not even for that, will I consent to 'em marrying while things stand as they are, and I can gainsay it. She'll have to stay till she is her own mistress, and there's a good year to wait for that. And a deal may happen in a year."

“And at the end of that time, if there is no change in Mr. Tindal’s circumstances, and she persists?”

“I shan’t quarrel with her anyhow, Mr. Hargrove. If trouble should come on her she’ll have all the more need of her mother. Grieved am I that I have to cross her now; she takes it so patiently.”

“And always indemnifies herself,” added the lawyer, referring to the recent exchange of letters.

“We’ll say no more about that—maybe we should ha’ done the same.” In her own secret heart, Mrs. Croft was sensible that she would have behaved much worse about the burnt letter than Pennie had done, and she was relieved rather than otherwise to feel that the matter had been compromised without her leave. It set her more at ease with her conscience than she had ever felt since Pennie kissed her after her disappointment, and made her no reproaches on her weak compliance with her enemy’s advice.

Between Brackenfield and the Lodge, Pennie spent a month, and in June she went with Lady Goodwin to Scarborough for a few weeks. She had experienced

some sharp pricks from fortune already, but here she got a wound that bled and bled again. Lady Brooke was there, fair, frivolous, fashionable as usual. She called on her cousin, and saw Pennie for a few minutes, ready in habit and hat to ride with Sir Andrew to Hackness.

“ Well, Pennie, you are not pining—sage little lady ; neither is he,” whispered she with laughing significance.

Pennie was not inclined to discuss Mr. Tindal : she coloured and turned away to the window on pretence of seeing if the horses had been brought to the door. There was a streak of malice in the fat white beauty's composition, and she would not let her victim escape so easily. “ Our friend Captain Bangham writes prodigies of him to Sir Thomas,” continued she, making her conversation general. “ The French call him the *possessed* Englishman, and say he bears a charmed life, and must have sold himself to the Evil One.”

“ The bargain did not insure him against being badly wounded,” said Lady Goodwin, dryly.

“ Wounded ? has he been wounded ? What luck !

Pennie, how proud you must be of his bit of glory ! I hope he will come back safe and faithful, but it was about a fascinating Irish Sister of Mercy I was going to tell you."

"I do not wish to hear : I daresay it is idle or malignant gossip," said Pennie, all aflame. Lady Goodwin looked alarmed. Lady Brooke went off into a trill of affected laughter.

"How impossible it is to teach polite behaviour to women not to the manner born," said she : but Pennie had vanished, and was none the worse for the comment on her abruptness and her yeoman race. She was, however, moved by the previous allusion. Sir Andrew found her an absent and silent companion in their ride, and told his wife on their return that he feared she was out of spirits.

"I am sure I am not jealous," Pennie said to herself over and over, but the idea of that "fascinating Irish Sister of Mercy," who was most likely a myth, would keep recurring to her fancy. Who had nursed Mr. Tindal through his long calamity ? There were hosts of Catholic sisters in attendance on the French military hospital, and perhaps one of them might be

Irish. And what if she were? Pennie comforted herself with a re-perusal of her letter, and the phantom fear was exorcised, but only to return with a legion of shadows worse than itself. Her mind developed a marvellous facility in conceiving troubles during the next few days. Yet real anxieties were abundant enough without imaginary woes. The news of the war was of perpetual conflict, attack, victory, repulse; the siege was pressing on; its dangers were hourly multiplying.

It was trying work to read the story in *The Times*, and then to go out amongst the showy crowd on the Esplanade to hear the band play, and meet idle gossips while her heart was aching and yearning for she hardly knew what. She had quite changed her mind now about Mr. Tindal's dying in the war gloriously. He was a volunteer, unattached, who risked danger not for duty, but for private sentiment; and if he fell, it would be obscurely and uncommemorated. She began to think he had done enough for honour, and restlessly to wish he would return to the peace of Eskdale.

She got a sort of ease presently, but it did not

bring the balm she had once anticipated under such circumstances. There came to her one morning, by the sea, another letter from the East, again enclosed to her by Mrs. Wynyard, and this time without any reproachful comment. It was a very little thin epistle, and the address was in a scratchy feminine hand. Pennie looked at it with fixed eyes for a full minute before she could open it. A presentiment of grief was upon her; and the presentiment was realized. When she broke the seal at last, she found only three or four feebly-traced lines, without signature, but in Mr. Tindal's writing.

“My dear, dear Love,—I have been hit again, in the left shoulder. The surgeon cannot extract the bullet, and looks grave. If I get over this, I shall come home; if not, little Pennie, keep your faith in me always. Before God, as a man about to die, I say it, I am guiltless of my poor brother's blood. My dear child, I should like to see you again; but if it is not to be, Heaven's will be done. I have got away from my burthen since I came here, for weeks and months together. It has hardly irked me at all. Good-by, darling, good-by.”

Below were a few lines in the woman's hand, to the effect that Mr. Tindal had received his wound in the capture of the Mamelon, where he had mounted the breach with the storming party that won it first. It was added, that though his state was critical, the writer had hopes he might do well eventually, because his sufferings were not aggravated by any mental disquietude. Pennie's heart sank as she read it. "He has, then, made up his mind to the worst," thought she, remembering the restless mortal he was when he lay invalided at Mayfield. And in a manner, her mind, too, was made up to the worst—but still she could not have encountered *that* without such a shock as would have proved to her how, in the depths of her present despondency, hope was yet rooted fast—too fast for anything but the absolute clutch of death and certainty to tear it up.

She showed her sad little letter to Lady Goodwin, and said she should like to go home to Eastwold that day.

"But why, Pennie?" remonstrated her friend. "It is livelier here; there is more distraction for your thoughts."

“I do not want distraction,” was her reply. “The earliest news of him will come to Eskdale. I must go.”

Advice was thrown away upon her, and entreaty was equally unavailing. She would go, and she went, attended only by her maid, and arrived at Eastwold, without warning, about dusk. When she explained the cause of her sudden return, she won from Mrs. Wynyard at last both comprehension and sympathy. The poor lady, environed by troubles of her own, had given few tender thoughts to her husband's ward; but here was she bearing a vast and tangible sorrow, waiting for news of life or death, which would be as life or death to her when it came.

“My dear little Pennie, I will never be hard upon you again,” said she, looking with pity in her pale, patient face. “I never quite realized before how much you loved him.”

“Neither did I,” said Pennie, and turned away, guiding herself up the great staircase, with a hand on the balustrade, weak and weary, and almost ready to fall. She had begun to feel that if *he* died

there would be nothing in the world worth living for. Her love had the principle of growth in it, and it had gone on increasing until it filled the entire circle of her life. That gone, it seemed as if only a blank future would be left—an insupportable, indefinite blank, from which death would be a blessed release.

V.

WELL MET, PENNIE.

PENNIE'S own room at Eastwold commanded a long look-out over the park, and beyond that of the road to Allan Bridge, along which came the daily post, carried by a sturdy old woman who had filled the office for half a century or more. The road was not so much frequented of a morning but that Pennie could discern her figure, and recognize it, as she came over the brow of the hill, with the bag slung across her shoulder, and a stout stick in her hand to help her on her daily round, which was very long, if she had a letter to deliver at any of the out-lying farms or cottages on the moor. From her window early, Pennie watched every day; and as soon as she espied Maggie Wardrope coming in sight, off she set to meet her, and, for many, many mornings, to meet disappointment in her company.

The old woman knew well enough what it meant. She had a grandson of her own at the war, as she told Pennie. "And many a long thought ha' I about him, when I lie awake of nights," said she. "His mother's dead, and so's his father. I brought him up only to lose him. I've never heard a word since he went away; but I fancy I suld knaw if he was killed wi'out telling, I was that fond o' him."

Pennie asked her *how* she should know; and walking back to Eastwold-gate in the post-woman's company, she heard a tale or two of the old-world superstitions that still brooded in those parts; of ghostly appearances, of voices distant but distinct, of weird warnings and mysterious impressions on the anxious mind, touching the state of absent and beloved friends. As she went up the park alone afterwards, she thought: "I have never felt as if I should really, *really* lose him, and this morning I have a sense as if he were not far off." The next moment she sighed, and reproached herself for delusive notions bred of Maggie's talk. But delusive notions or not, they returned on her at intervals

throughout the day, and gave her consciously a brighter countenance and air.

It was the middle of August now ; golden weather with the reapers in the fields, and the heather all gloriously abloom.

The evenings on the moor were Pennie's chief times of consolation. She used to wander up the fells from the back of the Eastwold House, with Anna or Lois or both for company, and sit at a certain point whence the dale was visible nearly to the head. On this particular evening Lois went with her alone, and while the child disported herself amongst the heather, Pennie fell into a not unhappy, meditative mood. Her eyes settled often on the Abbey gateway, clearly visible, from her point of observation, against the thick, dark foliage of the trees in the court. Figures moving on the road were few, but Pennie recognized Mr. Roberts, mounted on his rough, square cob, who entered at the gate. He presently, as she supposed, rode out again, accompanied by somebody on foot, and she lost sight of them where the lane bent round under the hill towards Allan Bridge. She had not met

the steward since her return from Scarborough, nor had she been able to glean any intelligence in other quarters. But uncertainty had grown endurable. The long silence gave hope that Mr. Tindal had borne up successfully against his first danger, and as she sat musing in the sunset, the impression of the morning returned upon her very strongly, and she said, aloud: "I shall have good news soon; I feel I shall!"

Just at that moment there appeared in the distance, darkly defined against the glowing sky, a man on horseback, advancing at a brisk trot on the ridge of the fell where the road ran. Lois put out her wild head from a heathery knoll, and cried, "Pennie, some one is coming. It is Mr. Roberts' pony, but it is not Mr. Roberts who is riding it. I don't know who it is."

Pennie rose and watched—went a step or two forward, and paused. "*It must be,*" said she, under her breath. "*It is!*" and she waved her hand, and ran to meet the rider who came steadily on and on, until she could discern the familiar features of his brown-bearded face under his broad hat. He did not

recognize her so quickly, but the moment he saw the flying figure was coming to him, he knew her, and shouted exultant, "Well met, Pennie, well met!"

"I knew you a long way off!" said she, arriving breathless at his side. "Oh, how glad I am." He stooped from his saddle to embrace her, thinking as she held up her face to be kissed, how lovely she was; for even ugly faces are glorified at such moments, and Pennie's eyes and mouth were beautiful always.

"I was going to look down into Eastwold garden for a glimpse of my love, and behold her here!" said he. "Has it seemed a weary while? Two years and nearly three months since we said good-by? Jack must submit to be tethered to a bush while we rest and have a talk. This is better luck than I dared to hope for."

Mr. Tindal dismounted, and secured the sober beast; then he made Pennie sit down on a little hillock facing the rosy clouds, and placed himself at her side, while Lois, after a sympathizing pleased survey of the re-united, inobservant lovers, betook herself to making Jack's acquaintance. For a little

while they were silent, each looking in the other's face, each holding the other's hands. Words could not express the joy, the boundless thankfulness that filled both hearts. Pennie fell a sobbing, and Mr. Tindal lifted his hat, and said solemnly, "I thank God for this day!"

"Sometimes I used to dread lest it might never come, but in my secret mind I believed always that it would," responded Pennie when she recovered her voice. "I do not feel as if I were made to be a sorrowful woman;" and then she sighed with excess of happiness. It was a moment of life almost perfect.

"I shall leave Eskdale no more until I can carry you away with me! Oh, Pennie, when shall it be?"

"I don't know,—tell me about yourself. I have so longed for news. Why did you not write again when you began to recover?"

"Twice I wrote, my darling, and no answer came. The letters must have been lost or intercepted. Mine to Roberts were only delivered. He supposed you in possession of my latest intelligence, or I am sure the good old fellow would have managed to let you know that I was in a fair way to live."

“Two letters of yours have been kept back from me while I was so wretched!” cried Pennie, her suspicions fixing at once on Mr. Hargrove. “Who could be so cruel? Not my mother, not Mrs. Wynyard certainly.”

“Let us put by our troubles, and never mind to-night. It is very pleasant to look at you again, Pennie,—very pleasant to feel myself safe here. When I was too weak to do anything but watch the shadows on the white hospital wall, I used often to fancy you were with me, and while the impression lasted I was quite happy in my helplessness. My nurse, a queer old snuffy Irish Sister of Mercy, an excellent creature, told me I called her by your name when I was delirious. You should see your double, a woman six feet high, stout and strong as a grenadier, and jocular in the most uncompromising brogue.”

Pennie laughed and thought some day she would tell him what she had suffered because of this amiable giantess. For the present she restricted herself to asking if the sister had sent him home healed and sound.

“ There are years of life in me yet, darling. The hardships I have encountered have done me good,” was his reply. “ Don’t look so pitiful, Pennie. I feel just now as if I had left my incubus behind me. It rejoices my heart beyond measure to see my sweetheart’s dear little kind face shining on me once more.”

But Pennie’s dear little kind face was, at the moment, more compassionate than bright. She was realizing his late experiences. He was much worn, and there was an expression of long pain, long weariness and continuing weakness about his mouth and brow. She wanted cheering under that impression, and regarding her with a teasing, loving air, Mr. Tindal said, “ Pennie, you have taken the liberty of growing in my absence ; there is considerably more of you than when I went away.”

“ Don’t you think I am improved ? ” asked she with a *naïveté* which struck her the moment the words were out of her lips, and made her blush and laugh confusedly as she tried to explain that *that* was not what she meant exactly. Mr. Tindal laughed too, and declared that she was very much improved ;

but all improvement, under the circumstances, told against her,—she ought to have fretted herself to a thread-paper in his absence. He should like to hear what account she had to give of herself in extenuation of her insensibility. Pennie grew evasive.

“There is less of *you*,” said she, softly stroking one of his thin white invalidish hands. “You must have suffered. Try to get up your strength fast, or the doctors are sure to order you off for the winter to some warm climate.”

“They will order in vain unless you will go too. That bullet is somewhere in my unhappy shoulder yet, and tortures me not a little. I should like to be cosseted up again as I was at Mayfield. Do you think your mother would take me in?”

Pennie shook her head, and tears rose in her eyes. “There is no change here—all are against you still but me.”

“I don’t care who is against me, if you are for me! Pennie, my darling, my darling!” he exclaimed with emotion that mastered him for a moment. Recovering himself presently, he plucked off his wide-awake, and showed her his dark hair all lustreless

and grey. "I begin to feel almost an old man while I am some years short of forty. I wish I could grow backwards to meet your youth, Pennie!" There was a grieved, regretful, impatient tone in his voice that smote her with keen pity.

"I love you best as you are," said she, intent only on consolation, and as his head was bent down, and his face hidden, she could not resist the impulse to lay her hand caressingly on the dry burnt locks.

For a minute or two he neither stirred nor looked up. Both were silent for a little while, and then Pennie rose to leave him. The red glow had faded out of the sky, and twilight was creeping over the fells. Lois was still discoursing with Jack, but at the same time she was wondering what would befall Pennie in consequence of this delicious accidental meeting. Nobody reasonable could blame her. It was not to be imagined that she could turn away when she saw Mr. Tindal coming. Lois felt sure, for her part, that she could not have done so—if Mr. Tindal had been her lover, and she had loved him. And so she should tell her mamma.

“Must you go, Pennie?” said Mr. Tindal. “I wish we were back in the old times when knights rode off with their ladies in defiance of parents and guardians! I should set you upon Jack, and carry you away without more ado.”

Their contentment was after all greater than their griefs; for both laughed at the idea of flight riding double on Jack, and Pennie said they should be caught by Mr. Hargrove before they had gone a mile, and so she would rather not start. With Lois following, they then walked down the fell towards a gate opening into Eastwold park, talking as they went over their past and future, their hopes and fears, with a perfect mutual confidence.

“You are my one chance, my last chance of endurable life,” said Mr. Tindal. “Without excitement and without consolation, I shall break down again. Of excitement I have had my fill—I need quiet and comfort now, sorely.”

“You should not need them long, if I had my will. I think I could do you good—”

“You could be my salvation! It is that accursed loneliness, I dread! I have more right to you than

anybody else in the world—God knows I want a bit of sunshine to make my life healthy.”

They had reached the gate, and were standing there reluctant to part, and Pennie afraid to linger, when the sound of two voices in conversation struck upon their ears. Lois came up at the moment, and asked Pennie if she were going indoors. Before she could answer Farmer Dykes appeared smoking his evening pipe, and strolling along in company with Mr. Hargrove. The lawyer's start and stare of astonishment were so palpable that when the men had gone by, Lois laughed and said, he looked as if he had seen a ghost.

“He saw what was quite as unwelcome to him,” replied Pennie, vexed at the rencounter, because she knew how it would be misrepresented to her mother. She made her good-bys short but very kind, and hurrying down the wooded banks to the house, went straight to Mrs. Wynyard in the drawing-room, and announced that Mr. Tindal had returned home, and that they had met on the moor.

“And he looks as if he had been almost dead,” added Lois.

Mrs. Wynyard lifted her eyes from her work, and contemplated Pennie's countenance as well as the growing dark would allow her. She could not fail to see that there was new hope there, or to hear the tone of joy in her voice.

"But he is in the way to recover his strength, Pennie?" said she interrogating.

"Yes, I trust he is," answered she; and without more words betook herself to her room, to think over the happy event which had seemed so remote and unsure, but which had come to pass at last.

Mr. Tindal's return to the Abbey was not known at Mayfield until the following day, when Mr. Hargrove made it his business to ride over to the farm to inform Mrs. Croft in what company he had met her daughter. The widow sighed when she heard it, and said: "Bless her, poor bairn, she'd be main glad! I do wish things would right themselves. It is very hard for a mother's heart to be for ever contradicting and thwarting a lass, Mr. Hargrove."

The agent looked impatient and contemptuous. "I trust you do not mean to give in now—let me understand plainly how you mean to go on with her."

“It don’t depend on me altogether, Mr. Hargrove, as you very well know. It’s a pity Mr. Wynyard isn’t at home to mind his own affairs and see to hers.. She’ll come of age in a few months, and I don’t suppose she’ll ask any of us what she is to do then. She has passed her word to Mr. Tindal, and it is my belief she’ll keep it, let who will be vexed. I haven’t the power with her I might have had if she had lived all her life at Mayfield. It don’t matter to her much what I think.”

“At all events let her stay at Eastwold—do not bring her over here at present. Mr. Tindal would be running backwards and forwards to Mayfield every day in spite of you; but to Eastwold he cannot go.”

“She has always been used to come home for a bit in the fall, Mr. Hargrove. I can’t say as I’m disposed to bid her stop away because of him. Trust me for taking care of my own daughter, at least as well as the Wynyards have done. I’ll tell you what I’ll do—I’ll write to Mr. Wynyard myself.”

“To what purpose?” inquired the agent, sharply. “What can you tell him that he is not already aware of?”

“I’m sure if I know! I don’t think there was ever a poor mother so harassed as me. I’d give my hand to see my bairn happy. I like Mr. Tindal, and I *don’t* like him!” exclaimed Mrs. Croft in cross perplexity.

“Well, let writing to Mr. Wynyard alone for the present. Go and give Miss Penelope a good talking to; let me hear the result, and if need be, I will write to him.”

It was about noon when Mr. Hargrove left Mayfield, and within an hour Mrs. Croft was driving herself over to Eastwold in great state. Pennie saw her advancing along the road, and donning her hat, she set out to meet her. The immediate effect of her lover’s return had been to make her so happy within, that she was almost blind to difficulties. The morning’s reflections had confirmed the last evening’s joy, and when she ran down the avenue to the gate, she appeared in her gayest, most provoking, daring mood—bright-eyed, blushing, ready to dance and sing.

“Don’t think to wheedle me by looking so bonny!” cried her mother, before they kissed.

"I've come to give thee a good rating, miss, that I have."

"I can bear it," said Pennie, and laughed.

"Naughty lass that thou art!"

The *rating* in the privacy of Pennie's own room turned out very mild. In fact, Pennie took possession of the superior word, and kept it. Mr. Tindal's missing letters being mentioned, the widow was so eager to exculpate herself from a second crime that she let slip all the advantage of her natural authority. "I would not have stopt another of thy letters for all the Mr. Hargroves in the world, Pennie love," asseverated she. "I wouldn't indeed. Maybe they were lost in the post. Never vex thy heart about his letters since he is home and safe."

"I do not intend to vex my heart about anything ever again; God has been very good to both of us."

"I wish He'd be so good as clear up that old story," responded Mrs. Croft.

"When can you do with me at Mayfield, mother?"

"You're fancying I shall give Mr. Tindal the run o' the house, Pennie; but don't expect that. Let us get harvest over before you come——"

“It is the first time you have not wanted me at home——”

“Oh, you’re sly, Pennie, making-believe as if I did not know why you are in such a fuss to come!”

“Will you have me in a week—a fortnight—a month?”

“I can’t say when I’ll have you, so don’t ask me. Mr. Hargrove advises leaving you here; but I’m thinking of writing myself to Mr. Wynyard—I’ve a mind to do it, really.”

“Write, mother, and I will write—I *will* have leave to correspond with Mr. Tindal now.”

“And how if you can’t get it, miss?”

“I shall get it—it would be of no use to deny me when I shall be free to please myself in six months.”

Mrs. Croft made no reply to this quiet little announcement, and being further urged and deluded by her wilful daughter, she promised that she would send for her home soon—perhaps, early in September. Meanwhile she might ride over to Mayfield occasionally. Her mother said she could trust her not to make any appointments with the master of the Abbey, and if they met by chance, not to give a

theme to the gossips of Eskdale by holding long parleys with him. Pennie replied to this expression of confidence in her discretion that she should be content with a permission to correspond with Mr. Tindal by letter at present; but without that permission she would *not* be content: and to that her mother made answer,—“Well, I suppose I must let you have your own way.”

This was justly regarded by Pennie as a withdrawal of her mother's former veto. They parted in perfect amity, and the next day's post conveyed to Mr. Wynyard a long letter from his ward, begging him to rescind his also, and giving him all the forcible reasons why he should rescind it that she could call to mind. Mrs. Croft not being so ready a writer as her daughter, and being very busy at home, deferred hers from day to day, and never wrote at all. But Mr. Wynyard answered Pennie promptly, as she desired and anticipated; and meeting Mr. Tindal the morning she received the letter, she communicated her welcome intelligence to him, and then carried it on to Mayfield.

Mrs. Croft happened to be rather out of temper

that day. Something had gone wrong in the dairy, and she cut Pennie's news short to detail her own grievances. Pennie put on a sympathetic face, and was as sorry for her mother's vexation as it was possible for her to be when she was so glad herself. It was not until she was mounting her pony to ride back to Eastwold, that her mother seemed clearly to seize the information she had brought her, and to comprehend all it implied. "Have you Mr. Wynyard's letter about you?" she then asked. Pennie had not.

"I'm sure I don't know who'd be plagued with gels that could help it! You worrit and tease until you get all you want. What do you expect your aunt Lister will say?"

"I don't care what anybody says, mother dear!"

"And what do you think Mr. Hargrove will do?"

"What can he do? I am not afraid of him, though I do not trust him. I believe he laid hands on those two letters of mine—Maggie Wardrope is always glad to send a letter to Eastwold, and to spare herself a walk when she has the chance."

"Don't talk so incautious, Pennie. You'd make anybody you did not like, your enemy."

“ I wish you would forbid him the house when I come home until I am gone again.”

“ That is easy done : home shall not be made disagreeable to you by anybody, Pennie. We might as well fix a day. To-morrow they'll begin cutting the wheat in the five-acre—it will be a long back-end this year ; harvest 'll be over so early, and you'll make a good stay, I expect. Suppose you come as next Thursday—to-morrow week. But let it be an understanding between us before you do come, that Mr. Tindal is not to be always at Mayfield ; for I won't have it.”

“ No, mother, I should not like him always there myself.”

“ Don't catch me up in my words, miss ; you know what I mean.”

“ Yes, mammy darling, I know. Kiss me now, and let me go, or I shall be late for tea, and it will be dark.”

So Pennie mounted, and rode off to Eastwold laughing, and triumphant in her heart, anticipating a very happy interlude in her experiences by-and-by. And she was not disappointed.

VI.

AN ENEMY HATH DONE THIS.

PENNIE's autumnal visit to Mayfield came, prolonged itself to her perfect satisfaction, and passed. Mr. Tindal saw her often, but he did not, as might have been feared, find her monotonously sweet. She had caprices of shyness which she could not control; caprices that answered always to his cheerful moods of self-possession. If he were melancholy, then she forgot herself, and comforted him with zealous affection; if he were gay, then she drew in, and was as reserved as with a stranger. She had heard or read somewhere that it is a grand mistake in women to let their lovers see how much they are loved. This mistake she had committed irretrievably, and now and then it disquieted her conscience. She was secretly vexed and ashamed that she was not more

her own mistress in his company, and she wondered why. Why she was one day at her ease, and another day sensitive, blushing and full of troubled discomfort. Did he observe the change, understand it, care for it? What did he think of it? She fancied that if she had seen such uncertain temper in another girl, she should have called it coquetry. But indeed, *indeed*, she pleaded to herself, she could not help it. She made the most beautiful, calm resolutions when he was not there, and when he came, it depended quite upon him—how he looked, how he spoke—whether they maintained her in cool dignity, or whether a fit of self-consciousness seized her, and they vanished like hoar-frost in sunshine.

Mr. Tindal was contented, however he found her. The variety added piquancy to their interviews. She amused him sometimes, and puzzled him sometimes, but he liked deciphering the puzzle; for whatever queer humour took her, it was genuine for the moment, and it never caused him to doubt her love. He relied on her, in fact, and trusted her as implicitly as if she were his wife already—very dear and very true. In his unfortunate position with the

world, a doubt would have been misery ; would have destroyed the chief charm of her affection, which lay in its certainty, safety, and repose. To that trial Pennie never put him—never tried to put him. She would have thought it a cruelty, a wickedness not to be forgiven. The caprices she betrayed were masterful, not wilful, and she would fain not have been subject to them.

It was midway in October when she returned to Eastwold, and though her meetings with Mr. Tindal ceased, they exchanged as many letters as they pleased. The dreary days, while the leaves were falling, were not dreary any more to her since she was happy at heart ; and the passage of each one brought her nearer to the time when she would be always where she wished to be.

Soon December snows were on the ground again. The Wynyard children counted it three years since the memorable Christmas at Brackenfield when papa left Eastwold while they were all away. And one afternoon, towards four o'clock, lively expectations fluttered about the drawing-room, in the persons of Anna and Lois ; for he was coming back ; he was to

arrive that day; he might appear at any moment. Mamma, Francis, and uncle John Hutton had gone to Brighton to receive him and bring him home; and Geoffrey and Maurice had set off across the fell to Kirkgate Station to meet them all.

The two girls had sprung up like weeds in the three years' interval. Anna was now nearly sixteen; tall as her mother, and if not handsome, wanting only more brightness and lightness to become so. Lois was a slender slip of eleven, with wonderful dark eyes, and glorious masses of rippling golden hair, as difficult to keep in net or knot, as she herself was to keep in the dull daily groove of the dull Eastwold life. She went dancing up and down the long room, singing and waving her arms to her song, like some sweet witch, courting the hour of inspiration. Anna was restless in another fashion. She stood a minute or two at the window that commanded the avenue and watched; then she replenished the fire; then she entreated Lois, for pity's sake, to cease her crazy manœuvres, then again she went to the window and watched.

She had repeated this monotonous round half-a-

dozen times at least, when the quiet figure of Penelope Croft rose from the writing-table in the great bay overlooking the terrace, and came forward into the fire-light. Pennie would strike her guardian as not much less changed than his own daughters. Hers was the same plain pathetic face in repose still, but cultivated, refined ; youthful as ever in candour of expression, but with thought in it, and a serious wistfulness in her beautiful eyes, which the slightly sarcastic curve of her lips alone kept from being melancholy. She was grown, and her always shapely figure was easy and graceful. Her dress, of which Pennie was exquisitely careful, fitted and suited her to admiration, and had the modest charm of perfect neatness and niceness in every detail. The impression she made on casual observers now was always agreeable, and people had quite left off criticizing her as odd, queer, or ugly. Those who knew her best wondered how they had ever thought her so.

It was principally on his ward's account that Mr. Wynyard was returning to England. He was returning against Mr. Hargrove's warning and advice ; for his own affairs were in no better plight than when

he went away, and whatever danger menaced him then, menaced him still. Nevertheless, he had persisted in his intention, giving his wife to understand that the agent's recent letters were unsatisfactory on some important business to which he covertly alluded as concerning his ward's fortune. There was no doubt, he added, that the first use Penelope Croft would make of her liberty would be to fulfil her engagement to Mr. Tindal, and for his own peace of mind's sake, he should like to see her before she fixed her fate irrevocably. Under these circumstances he conceived it his duty to risk that coming back to Eskdale, which Mr. Hargrove declared to be most rash and unwise. Mrs. Wynyard had long before this come round to her brother John's opinion, that her husband's flight had been a fatal error, which it was now too late to mend.

It was dusk when the travellers arrived, all of them very quiet and weary. Mr. John Hutton had parted from them at Norminster to return to Brackenfield. Mr. Wynyard came in shivering and shuddering with cold ; and Lois failed to recognize the father she most lovingly remembered, in the crouching,

blue-lipped, despondent-visaged man, who made a nervous and hurried response to their welcome, and immediately shrunk into a chair by the drawing-room fire, and spread his lean white hands to the blaze.

“Are you there, Mary?” he asked a minute or two after, turning his face to the open door. Mrs. Wynyard appeared, Francis, Geoffrey, and Maurice following her, and old nurse bringing up the procession.

“I’m blithe to see you home again, master!” cried Jenny, loudly and shrilly, as if addressing a person hard of hearing. “I’ve looked forward to it, an’ have allus said I should live to see it.”

“There, there, my good soul, I am not deaf,” replied Mr. Wynyard, testily. “It is Jenny, is it? Mary, if there is a fire in the library, I think I will go in there, and be quiet to-night.”

The sight of so many observant faces about him, though they were his children’s, disturbed him. Perhaps, also, his retirement was a relief to them. They did not talk much about him, and what they did say was in shy whispers—that they should not have known him; that he looked feeble and jaded; that

he seemed not very clear which of them was which, except mamma. They did not consider that the change from little children to tall boys and girls, which had advanced for them imperceptibly, was made at one spring for him, and that they were really strangers to their father at first sight. Penelope Croft, who had withdrawn herself until the meeting was past, came downstairs to tea at Lois's summons, and found the young people seated round the table in unwonted silence, with no signs of joy at his much-wished-for coming home. There was, in fact, a sense of pain and disappointment more or less present in the minds of all; and Lois could hardly swallow a morsel for her choking tears, that she tried to repress.

On the morrow Mr. Wynyard looked more like his former self again; and whatever his secret burthens, he was bodily at ease in the old library, of which he was put in sole and peaceable possession. He did not yet succeed in talking freely to his children; and after paying him a brief visit, they all left the library together, with the air of escaping. Penelope Croft went in afterwards alone to make her

compliments, and was equally relieved when her duty was done. So also was he. A man of kind and honourable disposition cannot look comfortably on those who, he knows, must eat the fruits of his neglects, mistakes, and misdeeds.

His wife gaye him her company all day. He did not dilate on his sordid shifts and mean privations abroad, but he said enough to let her infer them, and compassionate him for his tedious and degrading sufferings. It was not these, however, that set the look of heart-break on her face, which she wore when she came out to the children after Mr. Hargrove had been and gone—his first interview with his ruined client over. It was the dread he left behind him, menacing the future, that did that.

The news of such an event as Mr. Wynyard's return to Eastwold was soon bruited through the length and breadth of the dale, and a few of his old friends rode over to show their respect. But he refused to see them on the plea of ill-health, and more than a week elapsed before he was prevailed on to cross the threshold of his house.

There then ensued a spell of rare weather for December—weather soft, warm, and hazy, with occasional hours of sunshine in the morning. While the frost and snow endured, he hugged the library fire-side closely ; but Lois, prompted by her mother, told him one day how the air had changed, and invited him to come out with her and see. He was reluctant to move at first ; but being over-persuaded, he consented, wrapped himself up in a warm plaid, and accompanied her in a languid stroll to and fro the sheltered terrace. The next day he ventured a little way into the park ; and the next day after that again, Francis happening to mention Crabtree, as confined to his chair, Mr. Wynyard proposed walking down to the lodge to see him.

Old Crabtree's working times were now over, and he was declining fast into crusty senility. " I heerd yo had gotten home, Master Robert, thof I see'd no welcomes up, nor arches o' green, like there used to be. These is bad times, I doubt, bad times at the Ha'," was his puzzle-witted greeting.

" They might improve, Crabtree ; but whether they do or no, you will soon have done with them."

“ Maybe, not so soon as yersel’, Squire ; maybe, not so soon as yersel’. I’se not so cranky but that I can hear an’ see, an’ tek my food, thof I cannot go as I did. Hargrove passes most days, an’ I marks him. Shifty dog, thot Hargrove ; shifty dog, Squire. I niver could tackle him, try as I would ; but I mistrust him for a’ the mischiefs that’s come upo’ the Ha’. He is like what Parson Brown says of t’ auld un—‘ a liar fra’ the beginning.’ ”

Mr. Wynyard was disconcerted by this plain-speaking before Francis, and he made his visit short. When he was gone, Crabtree called to his daughter, Farmer Dykes’ dairy-woman, who lived at the lodge, to take care of him : “ Molly, a blast o’ death went out agen the Squire as he shut to the door. It is much if he lives to see New Year.”

Molly was a practical body, with so many anxieties of milk and butter and eggs on her mind, that she gave very little heed at any time to her father’s dark sayings. She gave none now, but went about her work of setting the cottage to rights all the more noisily and diligently for having had to rest while the Squire was there ; and the old man presently sank

back into the drowsy apathy from which he had been momentarily roused.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wynyard and Francis pursued their road up the avenue towards the house. When they had gone about half-way, two common men, evidently strangers there, met them, stared hard, passed by, and exchanged a few hasty words. They then turned quickly back, and overtook the father and son, just as they came within sight of their own door.

“Mr. Wynyard of Eastwold, I’m sure,” said the elder of the two, laying one hand on the Squire’s shoulder, and with the other presenting a slip of paper before his startled eyes.

“Oh, my God!” gasped he, clinging to his son’s arm for support. “This is Hargrove’s doing.”

“Our orders is not from any Mr. Hargrove, sir. The name is Debenham, iron-founder, Norminster. Three hundred and twenty-four pounds odd. If you can settle it, sir, so much the pleasanter for all parties.”

“Francis, my boy, go on before, and tell your mother I am taken.”

Francis, however, did not stir to leave him. "They see us from the drawing-room window, sir," said he.

They did see them—all the children—wondering what the parley meant; and Lois, alarmed she knew not why, sprang away to seek mamma. Mrs. Wynyard hurried to the front door, and opened it just as her husband was being half led, half carried, up the steps by Francis and one of the sheriff's officers.

"The game is up at last, Mary," said he, feebly, and as soon as they got him into the library, he fainted.

Then came on the scene Jenny, and cleared the frightened children out of the room, and told the two men, who looked compassionate, yet suspicious of a trick, that they might take themselves off as quick as they pleased; "for," whispered she, "there's another writ out agen the master bigger nor yours, an' the bailiff that serves it is *Death*."

Her mistress overheard her, and said, "Yes, it was in his face." She could not weep or make her moan yet; she was stunned by the suddenness and magnitude of her calamity.

A doctor was sent for, as Jenny observed, "just for the name of the thing," and Mr. Buckhurst came; but what more could he tell them than they knew already? It was the break-down of a life, long undermined, beneath the shock of a disaster too heavy to be borne. A few days, and the inevitable end must come.

That night the wind changed into the north again, and clouds of snow blew down upon the dale. Christmas-eve arrived, and found the world all white. The children were told that afternoon how papa was fast hastening away; and before they went to bed, they were all taken into his room to kiss him good-by; for Mr. Buckhurst had said it would be a miracle if he saw the morning. In the still hours came the carol-singers upon the terrace below the windows, where lights were burning; and through the hush of the death-chamber sounded the solemn hymn—

Wake any, watch any,
Here in this dwelling?
Weep any, wait any,
Lonely hours telling?

Moan any, pray any
Under heavy load?
Hope any, trust any,
Looking up to God?

Flies the snow, falls the snow, white upon the wold,
 Shines the glow, warms the glow, through the midnight cold.
 Light within, dark without, rich and poor together,
 Bright within, wild without, kin in Christmas weather !

Wake any, watch any ?	Moan any, wait any,
Watch the angels too !	Wearied out of life ?
Weep any, pray any ?	Fall any, faint any,
Angels pray for you !	Beaten in the strife ?

By the star, by the star, see our footsteps led,
 Some from near, some from far where our Saviour bled.
 'Neath the cross, 'neath the cross, shelter seek we all,
 One for us, one for you, Christ for one and all !

Wake any, watch any ?	Moan any, strive any,
Ever wakes our Lord !	Breaking Satan's bands !
Weep any, fear any ?	Watch and pray, hope and trust ?
Take His faithful Word !	Ye are in God's hands !

Soon after the carol ceased, the dying Squire opened his eyes, and, looking at his wife, said, " You will do better without me than with me, Mary."

Imagine this sentence thrilling through the silent room, haunted by who shall say what late regrets, vain compunctions, sad forebodings, when the wan lips of a father dying could murmur farewell to the wife of his youth, and the mother of his children, in last words like those :—" You will do better without me than with me, Mary."

But did she think so? Oh, surely not! In that supreme hour vanished vexed thoughts of over-anxious days and wakeful nights, of impending trial, poverty, and shame. Death was triumphant then—Death, the all-healer of differences.

“Oh, my love, my love, depart in peace! Leave us to the care of Him who is the Father of the fatherless, and the Friend of the widow.” And with the sob of forgiveness the lamp of his life waned out.

VII.

EASTWOLD HOUSE IN RUIN.

WHEN Robert Wynyard died, he did not leave his wife and children a shilling they could call their own. There was the house at Eastwold mortgaged up to the chimney-pots, and the Chase—as the property was called—mortgaged to the last stone and weed upon it. There were the mines in Colsterdale and Arkindale working to as much loss as profit. There were the old sticks of furniture, not worth carrying away; the grimy old portraits on the stairs; the rusty old armour in the hall; the queer old cabinets and old china ware in the drawing-room; the old court cupboard, and high-backed chairs in the dining-room; the musty old books in the library, and the old, old guns, and whips, and rods, and foils in the master's study; all the

old remnants and old relics of a good old family, which had been declining and declining, and wearing hollower and more hollow for three generations, until when Robert Wynyard was laid with his fathers in front of the altar in Eastwold Church, men said openly that it was all up with the old race at last, and they would have to go.

He was buried on New Year's Eve, in the afternoon, without any of the customary pomp and circumstance of a Squire's funeral. It was sleety, bitter weather, and few persons came except those who were bidden. The widow and children, John Hutton, and the dead man's two half-brothers walked after the coffin through the snow, and Mr. Hargrove followed with three or four servants and hangers-on of the broken household. That was all the show—not enough to draw even the cottage bairns a quarter of a mile from the fireside in the bleak January twilight. The air of desertion and loneliness in the church was complete. The friendly rector was laid up with gout, and a stranger from a distance read the burial service, through his nose and in haste, and with now and then a sidelong glance

towards the porch, across which drifted broad white flakes, that thickened and thickened as they fell, boding him a perilous ride in the dark over the hills when he had done.

“It seemed as if nobody cared,” whispered Lois to Geoffrey, as they struggled home against the storm.

“Nobody does care except ourselves,” was the lad’s response ; and the two children felt sadder than ever without knowing why.

In the windy tops of the elms the rooks were caw-cawing a dirge. Lois would stop to listen. “They are sorry ; they know,” said she. Geoffrey urged her to come on—how should the rooks know anything ? The loiterers had to run to reach the house door before it closed on the others ; when they gained it, they were out of breath, and almost laughing at a tumble Geoffrey had.

“It is over,” said Mrs. Wynyard with a great sigh as she re-entered the gloomy hall. “It is over, children ;” and then she looked round at her two girls, draped and hooded in snow, and at her three boys stamping their clogged feet on the steps. She had wept her heart dry long since, and to-day

there were no tears seen on her cheeks—only the furrows of past floods, and the dimness of grief that is sick of grieving.

They all went into the library one after another, and nurse took off their cloaks; her withered lips quivering, and her withered hands benumbed. She was the longest retainer of the family. She had held Robert Wynyard in her arms, an infant, and she had streaked him for his grave. Nobody had known him so long, loved him so blindly, excused him so unwearyingly as she. While the coffin remained open, she watched by it unresting; and since the morning when it was closed, she had wandered to and fro the house, muttering her vain lamentation to any hearer or none. It was quite unconsciously that she moaned now, almost in the widow's ear: "He's gone—the last Wynyard o' Eastwold, where there ha' been Wynyards ever sin' the flood. He's gone—*he's gone!* Oh, woe is me that I could ha' lived to see it!"

"Yes, Jenny, he is gone—dead and gone," said the widow, in low response; "and Eastwold must pass from his children. The time is fully come; no

foot of it is theirs any more." The sound of her plaintive voice restored Jenny to a sense of where she was, and when she spoke again it was in a less dreamy and abstracted tone.

"My heart's sore for them and for you, mistress. They don't favour much o' their father, but I love 'em as well as if they did. I've nursed you every one, bairns, an' now you'll go an' leave me."

At this touch the girl's tears overflowed. "You will come with us, Jenny," sobbed Anna.

"No, no, no; I sal never, never part from th' auld place!"

Mrs. Wynyard shut her aching eyes as Lois pressed up to her with tender caresses, and sweet whispers of, "Mamma, mamma," which broke soon into a loud cry of irrepressible childish anguish.

"Hush, hush," murmured the mother, fondling the fair head laid against her bosom; "oh, hush, my Lois, my darling! You were his pet, his treasure—he loved you best."

The boys stole one by one away. John Hutton, Squire Raymond, and Dr. Philip followed them, and the women-folk were left to ease their oppressed

souls, and to wail their wail out in the deepening gloom of the New Year's Eve.

An hour or two later they all met again, except John Hutton and the widow. He was closeted with Mr. Hargrove in the library, and she was gone up with Jenny to the stillness of her own chamber. Squire Raymond took Squire Wynyard's seat, which he would never take more, and soon routed out the miserable chill air of the drawing-room, by heaping the fire with massive logs that threw a ruddy gleam into its furthest corners. His rubicund presence was a comfort to the forlorn children. Good cheer and kindness shone from his face as from the jovial fire. "It is what we must all come to," was his sole reference to the day's events, and then he began to talk to the boys of their future. Ah, what consolation, what store of splendid hope in the future of the very young! In ten minutes every countenance was clear, and every eye was bright and steadfast.

Robert Wynyard's blurred and anxious visage was not perpetuated in any of his children. They took after their mother's people. Maurice and Lois owned the beautiful Wynyard eyes, but boys and girls both,

they had all the stout resolute Hutton temper. Dr. Philip Raymond, who had never seen all his young kinsfolk together until the day before, glanced from each to each as they sat grouped about the hearth, and silently thanked God that if He had set a hard fight before them in the battle of life, He had not left them without weapons. In countenance, air, and gesture, they all showed the same natural vigour. Even Maurice, the youngest boy, though slightly deformed, had a breadth of frame and a breadth of brow that determined him no weakling either in mind or body. He was less self-governed than Francis or Geoffrey, but he had their wit and their courage, and more. It was at Maurice that the learned doctor looked longest, saying to himself: "*He* shall be my boy." Indeed the others were already bespoken. Squire Raymond had given Francis his commission, and John Hutton had promised him his outfit; Geoffrey had been offered a start in the house of Forsyth and Company, American merchants at Liverpool. Mr. Forsyth, the head of the firm, was married to Tom Martineau's sister; and the proposal to take Geoffrey into his office was considered very handsome.

As the young people talked they grew excited, wild. Impossibilities put on the guise of quite likely things.

“Francis must win the glory, and Geoffrey the money, and we will get Eastwold again before we die!” shrieked Lois, the most sudden, enthusiastic, and glowing of them all.

“And what share shall mine be in the restoration?” asked Maurice.

“Oh, your share shall be to put it all into a song.”

“You have lived too much to yourselves, and have had too exclusive a bringing-up amongst moors and books,” said the Squire. “The discipline of the outside world will do some of you good.”

“You cannot imagine the monotony of this house—the dulness and oppression of it for the last four years,” Anna sighed. “If we had been Catholics and French, I should have taken the veil in some convent, and Lois would be growing up to the same fate; but we are Protestants and English, and there is not that refuge for us. I wish there were. I dread the change from the associations here which have

kept us up so long. Our clothes are shabbier, and our meals homelier, than many yeomen's children are ; but there remain about us a thousand signs of what we have been, and all the restraints of honour and good blood."

"Those restraints do not belong to place only, Anna."

"Francis may keep his name and his sword bright together, and wear his coat armour with an air ; but Geoffrey—will he gather no sordid dust amongst his cotton bales ? In a few years he will have learnt a new language. He will laugh our old notions down ; he will think that money, and money only, makes the world to go."

"It is a great power, Anna."

"I know what the lack of it can do. The boys are escaping ; but mamma, Lois, and I must still starve on as decently and discreetly as we may. We cannot work ; to beg we are ashamed."

"Women want very little," said Francis, who had sat a long while silent with meditative gaze on the fire.

"And good women do not complain for them-

selves when their brothers and sons thrive and are honourable," added the Squire. "Don't gloom beforehand, Anna, this revolution will be all for the best. If it had taken place a generation ago, you Wynyards of the present day would be none the worse off. It is poor policy for the most part to keep up the shadow of rank and dignity when the substance is gone."

"I am not a good woman ; I desire a career for myself," murmured Anna.

"An ambitious woman is, to my thinking, as much an anomaly as a winged heifer. She goes through the world a dramatic character, marvelled at, but always solitary. She has no home--only a circle of spectators. Be you patient, Anna, life and its possibilities are all before you. The most enviable career for you, and such as you, lies in the secure shelter of the fireside." This was Doctor Philip's opinion—himself a bachelor.

"And don't talk about starving," said the Squire. "Better work than starve, though pride be ever so much abased in the effort. Some prejudices are too costly to be kept alive in adversity,

niece ; they are hard to strangle, but they die of inanition—that's a comfort. A year or two hence you will be quite a calm little philosopher. You will have learnt a thousand things of which at this moment you have not the faintest inkling—happy consolatory things, more than you would believe now, if I were to foretell them to you."

"Surely, surely. One advantage goes, and another comes. Life is a series of compensations—never quite a blank unless we cast God out of our thoughts, and choose to regard it as a mere muddle of accidents."

It was easy talking for these elders, Anna thought. They had never wearied through the livelong day for a taste of impossible pleasure, gaiety, variety ; they had not grown up on the bread of shame-faced poverty ; they had not been turned out of house and home in the sensitive time of youth when the gaze of wondering pity scorches like burning glasses. She tried to smile, but the effort was not very successful—the present pain was more real than any possible compensation to come. They saw the effort and its failure, and respected both. She was not so

young as to be easily diverted from her tearful thoughts.

At the first word of serious conversation Geoffrey and Maurice had disappeared, and Francis had more than once yawned undisguisedly. All her brothers were given to thinking Anna a prosy, weariful creature, very patient herself, but also the occasion of much patience in others. It was unfortunate, for she had some great virtues—the pre-eminent virtue of sticking hard and fast in the good old groove of practical duty, though her fancies and dreams and desires might stray ever so far afield. In positive experience she was still simple as a child, but in reflection and gravity of temper, mature as a woman who knows enough of the rough side of the world not to anticipate from it too much. She had been lately her mother's confidante, and the shadow of care had so permeated the sunshine of her youth, that its best atmosphere now was a silent gloom. Nothing more rare from her lips than a word of encouragement, promise, or hope. Her tone of meditation and feeling was always in the minor. She was distrustful of any good ever befalling her.

If there appeared a little gleam and opening, she was the first to espy some cloud creeping athwart it. No joy was secure enough for her. If the sky was blue to-day, why it might rain to-morrow. An unhappy disposition truly, but one not uncommon amongst women early overweighed with petty cares, and wholly shut out from youthful joys.

“There is a great deal that is excellent in Anna, but she fatigues one,” was the cheerful Squire’s criticism on her, when he was left alone with Doctor Philip. “All the others are free, sanguine, natural young people. Not a boy of them but will do well. As for Lois, she’s enchanting.”

“A strange child, but she has a heart,” was the doctor’s more moderate eulogy.

“Of course the girls must stay with their mother?”

“Yes. And I will charge myself with Maurice. He can live with me at Chassell’s, and we will make a scholar of him, that is what he is most fit for. We must talk to Mary about it. Since nothing can be done towards a final settlement here for several years, I think they had better leave as soon as they conve-

niently can. Anna spoke to me yesterday of lodgings in some cheap sea-side village, but for many reasons I should recommend their moving no further than Norminster."

"Decidedly the best place in their circumstances, if they do not dislike it. Francis must be off to join his regiment next week, and the sooner Geoffrey goes to Liverpool the better. I shall ask Mary to stay a month at Eskford before they leave the dale altogether. It will be a sort of break for them, and it will please the girls. My wife suggested it."

"And for present means?"

"For present means, I must be their banker. Blood is thicker than water, Philip, and our mother was poor Robert's mother. It does not seem so very long ago since she was alive, and we were all lads together."

At this point of the brothers' conversation John Hutton joined them, the agent having just taken his departure.

"Well, Hutton, what do you make of Hargrove?" asked the Squire.

"Nothing. I suspect things are even worse

than the worst we have any of us imagined. I am very much afraid that a great part of Penelope Croft's fortune has gone with the rest. I shall see him again in the morning, and learn the precise facts from his accounts."

VIII.

PENNIE PENNILESS.

WHEN Mr. Hargrove left Eastwold that night after his interview with Mr. John Hutton, he drove home to Allan Bridge as fast as his horse could lay legs to the ground. It was nearly ten o'clock when he got there. His clerk, who had been bidden to wait his return from Mr. Wynyard's funeral, was dozing over a dusty fire in the office when he entered. He staggered up from his chair yawning, and holding out a telegraphic message which had come in the lawyer's absence. Mr. Hargrove read it, and confounded it viciously. He could not go to Norminster on the morrow; he had an appointment to keep with Mr. John Hutton at eleven o'clock, he said, and tossed the envelope on the desk. He appeared to be out of humour, cold, and tired; for he stood a

minute or two staring absently at the dull fire ; and when recalled to himself by a significant cough of the sleepy clerk, which inquired, as plainly as so many words, whether he was wanted or whether he was at liberty to go, he told him laconically that he could go. The next moment the lawyer was alone. His first act was to replenish the fire, his second to summon his housekeeper, who answered so promptly to his call that it was plain she had been waiting for it near at hand.

“ Mrs. Jarvis,” said he, “ put a change of linen into my bag, and bring it down here before you go to bed. I must walk to Kirkgate to catch the train that passes through at half-past three ; perhaps I may not be back until to-morrow night, or it may even be Saturday.”

“ *Walk*, sir, and it such bitter bad weather ?” remonstrated his old servant. “ Won’t you take some breakfast before you start ?”

“ No ; I shall get breakfast at my journey’s end. I’ll walk, because the moon will be up, and it is both shorter and safer across the fell on foot, than it is driving by the road in this frost.”

Mrs. Jarvis, only half satisfied by his explanation, retired to pack her master's bag. When she brought it in to him, he bade her good-night, and told her not to disturb herself any more on his account; for he would let himself out, and take care the spring of the door was fastened behind him. Eskdale did not stand in much dread of burglars. As the woman left the office, she observed that her master threw himself wearily into his great leather chair, and disposed himself as for a nap. No sooner was she gone, however, than he rose alertly, shut and secured both the inner and outer doors, turned the gas higher, stirred up the fire, and set to work with the rapid energy of a workman whose time will hardly suffice for what he has to do. Any one watching his proceedings might have thought that he was preparing for a final quittance of Allan Bridge; preparing for flight rather than for an ordinary business journey; and this was, indeed, the case. He had got to the end of his tether; investigation of his affairs with Mr. Wynyard was become inevitable; and, thanking his stars that he had made provident arrangements for his comfort in another quarter of the world, he

began to make away with the evidence of his speculations in this.

From his desk, from the drawers of a great bureau, from the boxes of his clients on the strong-room shelves, and lastly from an iron safe, sunk in the thickness of the wall, he selected a mass of documents which he cast in portions on the fire, and turned over and stirred up to quicken their destruction, until his visage was scorched and crimsoned with the blaze. The pile of embers grew and grew; leaves here and there escaped the fire, and still he heaped on more. While they smouldered, he took other papers from the safe, and stowed them in a bulky red morocco case; and notes and gold, which he thrust into his pockets. When the house-clock struck one in the morning, his work was approaching its completion. A few times again he poked the ashes about, and where a white fragment caught his eye, he took care to kindle it, and see it blacken into tinder. He had still an interval left to scrape up the light fluttering relics from the hearth, to lay coals on them, to re-lock and replace everything in order; and when this was

done he went pryingly about the office, to see that he had dropt nothing, and that nothing had escaped him.

After that he washed his hands and face, which had contracted some grime at his work, and finally wrote a note of cautious explanation for his clerk, giving him the same notice when to expect him back as he had given to Mrs. Jarvis. This done, he put on his great-coat, wound a plaid about him, and, taking his bag in his hand, left the house softly, and walked at speed across the moonlit market-place. A woman was knocking at the doctor's door as he passed, and from an upper window, noisily flung open, he heard Mr. Buckhurst calling out to know who wanted him; for Buckhurst was sole surgeon of Allan Bridge now—sole acting surgeon, that is. Mr. Grey still lived, but since his paralytic seizure he had given up practice. The lawyer remembered this old alienated friend's condition at that moment and was thankful.

After passing the bridge, Mr. Hargrove turned short off into the fields, where the snow lay pure and untrodden in the moonlight. It was windy and stinging cold, but the air was clear, and the way

plain that he had to go. He reached Kirkgate in sufficient time, and got into the train, which he left again at the next junction for Liverpool. About the hour when Mr. John Hutton walked into Allan Bridge to keep his appointment with the agent, the agent was studying the advertising-boards at the landing-stage with a view of taking his passage in the first vessel bound for the States. The *Ariel*, a swift screw-steamer, which was to sail on the following Wednesday for New Orleans, was the earliest, and having decided that he must risk the delay, he went to the shipping-office, and engaged a first-class passage forthwith. Meanwhile he judged it advisable to keep himself close at his hotel.

On Sunday morning Mr. Hargrove was not as usual respectably punctual in his place at church; in fact, he was not there at all, and his clerk, who observed with surprise his place vacant, walked round the market-place with his wife and children on their homeward way, to inquire of Mrs. Jarvis if any letter from him had come to the office. No, there was no letter. On the Monday, the lawyer was still absent,

and his absence was still unaccounted for. Mr. John Hutton called at noon that day, fully expecting to find him returned, and when assured by the clerk (who felt bound to make an excuse for his principal when he had none) that Mr. Hargrove had been unexpectedly detained at Norminster by business of the last importance, but that he would be home in the evening without doubt, he went his way again, annoyed indeed, but still far from suspecting the truth. On the morrow, however, when the clerk himself looked queer, and tried to suggest the explanation that Mr. Hargrove might have been obliged to go on to London, he began to see that all was not right, and after questioning the man sharply, he demanded the agent's address.

“He left no address, sir, but he puts up at the Swan in Norminster, when he does not go to his brother's house,” the clerk said, deprecatingly. “He is not, however, at either place this time. When I found he did not come last night, I sent over a person to Kirkgate to telegraph to Mr. Sam. Hargrove at the *Gazette* office to ask if he knew where he was, and the answer that came back was, he hadn't seen him.

I don't understand it, sir, I don't really, any more than you do. There have been ever so many people inquiring for him, as it always happens when he has to go away on business."

"It is very odd behaviour, very odd indeed. Is it his custom to act in this way?"

"Never knew him do so before, sir. He is methodical in his habits, and most laborious. He never flags at work; his energy is wonderful, sir, and such a memory! Mrs. Jarvis fears he may have been taken ill; but he could hardly be taken so bad—unless he'd met with an accident—that he could not send word to me, for business' sake, where he was detained. I did hope to see him last night. It is very odd, sir, as you remarked just now."

Mr. John Hutton cast a glance round the office, and his eye lighting on the boxes that bore the names of Wynyard and Croft, he said,—“And it is very inconvenient too. I wanted to return to Brackenfield to-morrow; but it is useless to leave Eastwold until I have seen Hargrove again. As sole executor of Mr. Wynyard's will, everything lies with me to do; and looking at the circumstances, I don't

know what business can be of greater importance than my business."

The clerk agreed with him and muttered, "Exactly so, exactly so," in a sympathetic, injured tone. He was an elderly man, and had seen a deal of worry, consequent on wills and executorships; and he knew enough of the late Mr. Wynyard's private affairs to understand that the regulation of them would be no sinecure.

As Mr. John Hutton turned out into the market-place, thoroughly puzzled and dissatisfied, Penelope Croft came riding by on her way to Eastwold. She had gone home by her mother's wish while Mr. Wynyard lay at death's door, and had remained at Mayfield until all was over. Mrs. Wynyard had sent Francis this morning to bring her back, that she might have some conversation with Mr. John Hutton before his return to Brackenfield, and close by Mr. Hargrove's office she met him. He immediately communicated to her the fact of the agent's mysterious absence, and Pennie replied with the coolest little sarcastic air in the world, "I have no doubt he has run away. I quite anticipate that when you come to

look into my affairs, you will find he has been cheating my trustees right and left for ever so long, and that, instead of being a great heiress, I am Pennie Pennyless."

"Wait a minute," said the perturbed executor, and hurried back into the lawyer's office. The clerk was mounted on a tall stool when he re-entered, with one of the japanned boxes—the Croft Ward box—in his hands; and his face was of the colour of the leatheriest parchment.

"Sir, there is something wrong—I fear there is something wrong," said he in a low voice, and with a shake of his grey head. "I don't know whether I should be justified in doing it—but, odd enough, I have just discovered that Mr. Hargrove, who was so particular always, left his private desk unlocked, and the safe key and other keys are in it."

"Then unlock that box. I have a list Mr. Grey gave Miss Croft of what its contents should be." It was opened, and was found to contain only two bundles of deeds.

"I'll take the responsibility of looking into the safe too, sir," said the clerk, now all over tremulous

with agitation. When the interior of that was revealed, it was found to be nearly empty, and the few documents that were left were in confusion.

“Mr. Hargrove never meant to come back when he started last Friday morning,” was the clerk’s verdict on this evidence.

“And he has had nearly five days to get clear,” added the startled executor. “*Five days.*”

It was plain the clerk was not in his master’s confidence, and that he was as much staggered by the disclosure of the keys as Mr. John Hutton. “The police ought to be telegraphed to, sir, in London, and at the sea-ports. He’ll run for Hull or Liverpool—not an hour should be lost.”

“I’ll borrow Francis Wynyard’s horse, and go to Kirkgate at once.”

“And I will write off letters by post, sir, and send a description of the man. He was close, sir, was Mr. Hargrove, close as wax, but rogues trip always somewhere. Think of his leaving his desk unlocked! I have served him many years, and never knew him do that careless thing before.”

Mr. John Hutton’s countenance saved many ques-

tions when he rejoined the young people. Francis gave up his horse at a word, and his companion too, who was invited to ride to Kirkgate with the dismayed executor, that he might have some talk with her by the way. Pennie told him many significant details of the agent's behaviour towards herself since her resolution of adhering to her engagement with Mr. Tindal had been ascertained; and freely avowed her opinion that he had objects of his own to serve in interfering with her, which he could not have served had Mr. Wynyard been at home, or Mr. Grey capable of transacting business. Mr. John Hutton asked why she had not spoken out before.

“I have never done anything but speak out,” replied Pennie. “But those to whom I could speak were either like Mr. Wynyard, so possessed by a belief in Mr. Hargrove's cleverness and honesty, that they made no account of my speaking; or like my uncle Lister, who predicted mischief, but stood obstinately aloof from meddling to hinder it. He was mortified that my father's will excluded him from all interest in me and my affairs, and whatever wrath he may feel against my trustees and their agent, will, of course,

be ameliorated by the reflection that they have only justified his doubts, and fulfilled his predictions."

"It is no laughing matter, Pennie. The roguery of the agent is dishonour to the trustees."

"For the money itself I am absolutely indifferent; but I hope Mr. Hargrove may be caught, and punished for his iniquities. I have no tenderness for knaves—none!"

Pennie's mouth closed firmly at the last word, and remained closed several minutes. Mr. John Hutton had only seen her once, at his sister's wedding, since the merry Christmas at Brackenfield, and he was rather surprised to find into what a practical little lady the Quixote of that memorable time had developed. He liked her none the less for the change. She waited outside the telegraph-office at Kirkgate while her escort went in, and despatched his messages to the police at various points to be on the look-out for the fugitive lawyer; of whose person he sent a sufficient description to guide them in their pursuit, until the morrow's post brought the clerk's letters. This business accomplished, Pennie and he, talking of affairs all the way, rode back to

Eastwold, whither Francis had already carried the intelligence of Mr. Hargrove's evasion.

The next day was dreary and winterly desolate everywhere, but nowhere more dreary or winterly desolate than on the Liverpool landing-stage, alongside which, about two o'clock of the afternoon, lay the *Ariel*, getting up her steam to go down the river with the tide. The wind howled with a low, menacing monotony; the water heaved and plunged in heavy sullen waves, and the opposite shore was scarcely seen through the reeking fog.

Not a soul was on the landing-stage but those who had business there, of whom one was a short, thick-set, broad-visaged police detective in plain clothes, who passed frequently with an air of zealous occupation between the vessel and the shipping-office, a note-book and pencil in his hand. The heavy luggage of the passengers had been all gone on board, and most of the passengers themselves; but a few lingerers came dropping in after the rest, execrated the abominable weather, and disappeared into their cabins to prepare for the miseries of the

voyage. Almost at the last moment, when the *Ariel* was panting and throbbing for a start, a tall, stout man, with close-shaven, purple-red face, and a white muffler wrapt in numerous folds about his throat and chin, appeared hurrying down from the town. A policeman who had been pacing his icy beat, always within hail of his superior, at a signal from him, turned and followed the last comer, and just as he was about to set foot on the deck of the *Ariel*, the detective laid a firm hand on his breast, and said, "Mr. Hargrove of Allan Bridge?"

"No, Mr. Conyers of Gateshead," replied the tardy passenger, with well-simulated astonishment.

The detective, however, politely persisted in detaining him, and in reiterating his first interrogatory, until there emerged from some furtive watch-post on board the *Ariel*, that bane of the lawyer's existence, Jacques the grazier, who joyously identified him as Mr. Hargrove, with his black whiskers shaved off, and asked him if it was not a queer coincidence that *he* should happen to be in Liverpool, and that his cousin in the police should know it, just when an honest Eskdale man was wanted

to help catch an Eskdale rogue. Jacques was not a person of delicate mind, and had no sympathy for genius in misfortune. He insisted on telling the agent, who submitted to inexorable fate without a murmur, how he happened to be there, doing a stroke of business in Irish pigs, when his cousin let him know that he could do a service to his country: "An' proud am I to ha' done it," concluded he, making Hargrove a bow; "thof it is at your expense, sir. It has been a'most as exciting as a rat-hunt."

Mr. Hargrove did not sail in the *Ariel* that afternoon, and before night it was known at Allan Bridge and at Eastwold, that he was in safe custody. After three or four embarrassing interviews with the magistrates, first in Liverpool and then in his own neighbourhood, he was committed to take his trial on the charge of forging signatures to a power of attorney, by which he had sold out and appropriated various monies in the public funds, trust-monies invested in the names of Robert Wynyard, esquire, of Eastwold, and George Grey, surgeon, of Allan Bridge, for the use of Penelope Croft, their ward. There

were a multitude of minor frauds and speculations laid to his account, from which others amongst his clients suffered; and the wholesale destruction of documents he had made before his flight, caused the investigation to be very tedious. It was not probable that a complete clearance of his affairs would ever be accomplished; but it was early ascertained that nothing of her splendid fortune remained to Penelope Croft, but Haggerston Mills, and a small farm which her father had owned before the railway mania floated him into sudden opulence. What the fraudulent agent had done with his spoils could not be discovered, but it was conjectured that he had placed them in American securities, and that when he had undergone the term of seclusion, which the law might assign to his crimes, he would retire to the States, and enjoy the fruits of his labours. The case was very complicated and very bad, and as bail was utterly refused, Mr. Hargrove had to take up his involuntary cold lodging in Norminster jail, to await the coming on of the Spring Assizes.

While the exposure of Mr. Hargrove's fraudu-

lent transactions was in progress, the extent of the Eastwold liabilities was also revealed. Money had been raised in Mr. Wynyard's name, for which his estate was now indebted, that had never been applied to his service. In two or three instances, where the lenders were not people of business, the securities pledged had never existed. On one fabulous property, a mortgage of five thousand pounds had been effected. There were some doubts whether Mr. Wynyard had not been his agent's confederate before he became his victim. Those who suffered loss by him judged him severely. As the trustee of Penelope Croft, his condemnation was both loud and deep. The ancient house of Wynyard was declared to have fallen, not only with a great ruin, but also with foul dishonour. Before this fiat was promulgated, the unfortunate family had already begun to break up. Francis had joined his regiment, which was under sailing orders for India when he heard it, and the ardent young soldier's passionate outpouring of indignation and sorrow, in his last letter to his mother before embarking, was most pathetic. She read it to Geoffrey and Maurice, who

were still with her, and their way of receiving it shadowed out a good deal in the latent character of each.

Maurice exclaimed fervently, "Let him be a second Warren Hastings, and rebuild a second Daylesford!"

Geoffrey said he did not see the sense of that. It did not touch the worst wound. It seemed to him that they had inherited a vast debt, the payment of which ought to be their chief consideration. "And," added he quietly, "were there no debt due to others, I am sure it would be small joy to any of us to see Eastwold flourishing again, if a second Burke should be able to denounce the one that re-edified the old place as a common enemy and oppressor, a man that had betrayed the trust, and sullied the ancient honour, of England."

"No," agreed Maurice, "I had forgotten Hastings' crooked ways to his ends. Francis would rather die a Chelsea pensioner than pay the price he paid for fortune."

A few days after this brief, significant conversation, Geoffrey Wynyard was seated at a desk in the

office of Forsyth and Co., in the unfragrant atmosphere of Wolstenholme Square, Liverpool; and Maurice had taken his place in the upper form at Chassell's school in Norminster.

IX.

LOVED FOR HER OWN SAKE ONLY.

PENELOPE CROFT took her descent from the dignity of heiress-ship with admirable courage. Mr. Tindal said to her, "My dear child, I do not care if you have not so much as the price of a pair of shoes; I am glad your money is gone. Now it will be seen that you are loved for your own sake only."

Pennie had learnt to like, and even to require, the refinements of life, and it would have been undeniably hard lines for her, had she possessed no prospect but a home at Mayfield. Her mother told her she would keep her a horse to ride, which she would miss more than any other appendage of her lost fortune; and the warm-hearted woman indulged herself for a day or two in a dream that perhaps a breach might happen at last between her daughter and the master

of Rood, and that she might ultimately see her married to her cousin Dick, or some other fine young yeoman of their own kind. This hope, however, was soon dissipated. Pennie gave her to understand that Mr. Tindal waited only her consent to welcome her to his home, and that she waited only until the early months of mourning for her guardian were past, before she accepted his welcome. Fortune was gone, but love was left, and that, said Pennie, was better than gold. Mrs. Croft, secretly humiliated and perplexed by the disastrous fulfilment of her daughter's previous predictions, thereupon gave in, and declared that she would have nothing more to say either for or against her marriage. She would not hinder it, but neither would she help it on, or formally consent to it. Pennie was her own mistress; and as she made her bed, so she must lie on it.

Mrs. Wynyard remained at Eastwold with her girls for several weeks after the boys left, and Pennie remained with them. Her affairs were at this time the talk of the whole valley. Some people marvelled how she could keep on amicable terms with

her guardian's family ; others marvelled how her guardian's family could endure before their eyes a girl who had been so shamefully despoiled. But what had happened made, in fact, little or no difference amongst them. Pennie was too just to blame the innocent ; too generous not to screen them. Mrs. Featherstone ventured on some indignant moral commonplaces before her, and Pennie cut them short.

“ Pray, do not talk as if Mr. Wynyard's children were to be condemned ! ” exclaimed she. “ I have heard that a lady in our neighbourhood declares that no notice ought to be taken of his wife and family on his account. I wish she had said it to me, that I might have preached her a *sermonette* on worldly-piety as contrasted with Christianity.”

Mrs. Featherstone was the delinquent, and with a nervous, frightened laugh she changed the subject.

Mrs. Wynyard was not so considerate for Pennie as Pennie was for her. Sorrow is always more or less self-absorbed. Pennie thought that perhaps now, since she had lost the importance of a great heiress, she might be less jealously guarded ; and

that Mr. Tindal, who was only impatient to prove his disinterested fidelity, might have been permitted to come occasionally to Eastwold. But Mrs. Wynyard did not propose it, and Pennie would not ask the grace, and in consequence she saw very little of her lover for some time after her change of fortune. She was regretful though patient, but Mr. Tindal was rather angry, and had to be kept in good-humour by more frequent letters.

Without effort, without any guide but the generous impulses of her own heart, Pennie had acted on him as a sound, revivifying tonic since his return from the East. While in Mrs. Wynyard's house, she never sought a meeting with him, but neither did she ever avoid one, and when they did meet, she availed herself with quiet determination of the opportunity of continuing her good work. Under this chance sunshine, he insensibly recovered his spirits—perfect health and comfort of body it was impossible that he could recover with the bullet still in his shoulder; and after much urging, Pennie persuaded him to go to London to consult some skilful surgeon. After a brief absence, he returned to Eskdale, leaving

his tormentor behind him, and looking a dozen years younger and stronger. He was soon almost his best self again, and his journal-letters from Rood to Pennie at Eastwold, became the most entertaining pieces of periodical literature that reached her hands, quite apart from their intrinsic value as lover's letters.

The gossips of Eskdale, while concerning themselves with the adversity of Mr. Wynyard's ward, did not forget her extraordinary tenacity in maintaining her engagement to Mr. Tindal in defiance of all authority. Up to this date there had been no reversal of the popular verdict against him. His wounds in the war brought him no special honour. What distinction was his bit of glory, where all were brave, all decorated? But now began in many quarters a vacillation of sentiment. It was not Pennie's fortune that had involved her with him; apparently he cared nothing for her fortune, but was attached to her little insignificant self. It was certain they were to be married in the spring, for the Abbey was undergoing a complete renovation, and both he and she looked as happy as two people in their circumstances were bound to look.

The Featherstones contemplated the period of this union with some anxiety. They had never retrieved their lost ground with Mr. Tindal, and it was an annoyance when the clergyman of the parish was not on easy terms with the Squire. The round, rosy wife dropped her acrid moralities, and wrote to Pennie, expressing a hope that when they were near neighbours, they might also be friends—neighbours at Mayfield, or neighbours at Rood it might mean, for the phrase was not precisely worded. Pennie understood it to signify a reference to her marriage, and replied that she could have no friends who were not also friends of Mr. Tindal; adding that she trusted yet to see him judged fairly and favourably by the world, even though the secrets of that dark day in his early life should never be completely unveiled.

This letter of hers which reproached none, but which expressed her own invincible faith in Mr. Tindal's innocence, was quietly handed about in Eskdale, and produced a salutary effect. All the ladies who knew Pennie personally avowed their intention of keeping up their intimacy with her in every event.

“ I shall certainly call upon her at Rood,” said worthy Mrs. Brown of Eastwold. “ And, of course, if I call on her, the doctor must call on Mr. Tindal. The Gilbert and Michael Forresters, the Raymonds and the Huttons will never drop Penelope Croft, they are all so fond of her. One would think she must know the man she means to marry. She is a shrewd little body enough, by no means wanting in sense. I should never be astonished to hear it certified that she had judged him justly, and that the rest of the world had been all in the wrong. She is bold to risk tying herself to him, but she is young, self-confident, and in love ; and all I wish is that God may bless her, and give her good luck with him ! ”

Mrs. Brown was a venerable authority in Eskdale, and when her declaration of indulgence towards Mr. Tindal became known, there arose a general feminine conspiracy to support Pennie, and a general feminine repudiation of the story which had made the master of Rood so long an outcast from society. The masculine prejudice did not succumb so readily or so universally ; but it began to waver, and one soft day in March, Mr. Tindal appearing in the hunting-field

when the meet was at Eskford, Squire Raymond greeted him with a grave, "Good morning, sir!" which his eldest son, who was riding with him, seconded. The blood darkened in Mr. Tindal's face as he returned the courtesy, and thought, "Dear little Pennie, it is for her sake."

If the kindness was for her sake, for her sake he accepted it, and was thankful. The thought that in taking her to himself, he might be cutting her off from all other companionship had recurred to him often with a pang. She knew it had, and had soothed it in her own way.

"I have not made my friends amongst those who will idly turn their backs on me," she said. "If any do, I shall not break my heart. I propose to be perfectly happy and contented; and swear fealty to you, to live and die against all manner of folks! If I were to forsake you, would not the Dale cry out on me for shame? My own mother, much as she has opposed us, would be the first to call me faithless and cowardly. I owe a duty to you before any—and if I needed any other plea——"

"You love me! Verily, Pennie, I believe it."

That was the whole truth. She loved him fervently, and without fear ; and he loved her again with manly tenderness, with perfect reliance and peace. And this satisfied her ; for she was more bountiful than exacting. She gave without grudging, as mothers and sisters do, unselfishly, and was content to feel that he rested in her affection. So that she might comfort him, be a friend to him, a companion of his solitude, she cared for nothing else. Thought of sacrifice there was none in her mind ; for she had as much expectation of permanent happiness as the brides of more fortunate men.

But many natural girlish pleasures of her position she had to forego. Nobody enjoyed talking with her of that approaching time when she was to be Mr. Tindal's wife. When the thing was done, kinsfolk and friends were agreed to support her ; but, beforehand, it seemed as if it were impossible for any one of them to let the light of their countenance shine upon it cordially. The nearer the time drew on, the more averse did her mother become to speak of it. None of the widow's gossips, not even Mrs. Jones of Beckby, offered her congratulations. Mrs.

Lister was austereley silent on the subject : Mrs. Wynyard sadly silent.

Pennie felt that she was living in an atmosphere of suppressed disapproval, but she kept up her courage marvellously. She had soon the opportunity of comparing her own circumstances with those of another bride-elect, of her cousin Joanna, who was to be married in April to Mr. Gaskill, with the full approval of the friends and connexions on both sides. Somebody was always wishing Joanna happiness, giving her presents and giving her advice. There were open consultations about the furnishing of the best parlour at the new farm which Mr. Gaskill had entered on at Michaelmas, and a world of tattle over the choosing and making of bride-clothes. All these innocent delights Pennie missed. Mr. Tindal gave over the Abbey, except his mother's room, for entire re-decoration to a man from London. Pennie paid no visits to her future home as Joanna did, to give an opinion, express a preference, or decide a difficulty in choice or arrangement. Perhaps she might have done so had she been at Mayfield ; but she was still at Eastwold, and her mother desired her to stay there

until Mrs. Wynward and her daughters quitted it. Whether she was to have new clothes or not was a matter left entirely to herself and her maid—a quiet, middle-aged woman, who was much attached to her without showing it, except by diligent service. Morrison had married out of the Goodwin family, and after a few years being left a childless widow, she returned to her former way of life, and had been Penelope Croft's maid since her *coming out*. She had consented to remain with her after her marriage, and as soon as the time of that was determined on, she set to work, to do for her young mistress what, under brighter auspices, would have been the topic of many a zealous feminine conclave, and the paramount interest of her mother.

Anna and Lois used sometimes to come into the room where Morrison was sewing all day long; but seeing the matter of Pennie's wedding avoided by their mother, they were shy of it too, though they liked to look at her pretty things. One afternoon Lois ventured to ask if *the dress* would be silk or satin, and if it would come from town.

“It is to be only a morning dress of white

piqué, Miss Lois, which I shall make," replied Morrison.

"And no wreath and no veil!" exclaimed the little girl, under her breath.

"No, Miss Lois, a Leghorn hat—that's all."

"I should like to see the wedding, and so would Anna; but we shall not,"—and Lois, after a few minutes' serious contemplation of the fine linen, cambric, and lace which Morrison was busy upon, retreated, feeling as if Pennie's love-story were being brought to a climax in a rather dull, tame, unsatisfactory style. Lois liked good endings, with a flourish of trumpets to all her stories; and she thought Pennie faithful enough to deserve a really perfect and triumphant conclusion to hers. Like many another romantic young heart whose experience lies all in tales of fancy, Lois looked at a happy marriage as the wind-up of life, just as it is the wind-up of the pleasantest story-books.

X.

A LONG FAREWELL TO EASTWOLD.

THE last day in the old home was a melancholy day to Mrs. Wynyard and her girls. They were to carry nothing away but their personal belongings. No servant was to go with them. Everything that was a part of their past state was to be left behind. Jenny, the nurse, was to stay at the lodge with Crabtree; and Farmer Dykes and his wife were put in sole charge of the deserted house. Mrs. Wynyard had very little voice in these arrangements. Her brother, John Hutton, directed all. He had by consent undertaken the management of the property for the benefit of the creditors, until the coming of age of his nephew Francis. The mines in Colsterdale and Arkindale had been let at a rental on short leases, and the Chase had been let out to farm—with

no very brilliant prospects of redemption from debt certainly, but with the acquiescence of all concerned that nothing better could be done at present.

The widow was patient and quiet now; but as the inexorable necessity for their departure pressed closer and closer, Anna grew coldly resentful, and Lois wept often and passionately. And yet, beyond the joy that is natural to youth and health, they had never been joyous at Eastwold. Anna especially had chafed against the dulness of her impoverished home, but her heart ached miserably at leaving it. She shrank from taking that long step down in the world, that the involuntary exile from the ancient place implied. She did not murmur aloud, but she speculated much within herself what manner of dwelling they should find at Norminster, and what manner of friends; whether they should be looked on coldly or kindly; whether their narrow means would shut them out from the companionship of cultivated minds, and compel them to fall back on a lower class of society, if they wished for society at all. Her private resolution thereanent was to live a recluse, rather than consort with inferior people.

The anticipated visit to Eskford was very welcome to Anna and Lois ; but their mother would far rather have carried her griefs at once to Norminster, and the furnished lodgings which Dr. Philip Raymond had secured for them to enter on at the beginning of May. Not to spare herself, however, would she deprive her children of the least relief to their sorrow, and on a sunny April morning they mounted all three into the carriage that had been sent over by Squire Raymond to fetch them, and bade a long farewell to Eastwold. Penelope Croft, who had stayed to the end, rode with them to Allan Bridge, where their ways divided, she going home to her mother at Mayfield, and they striking across the river to the other side of the valley, where, some seven miles higher up the Esk than Rood Abbey, lay the ford which gave Squire Raymond's house its name.

As the carriage drove up the avenue, the old Squire and the young Squire, his eldest son, came out and stood on the steps to welcome their guests, who, clad in sombre crape and cloth, and closely veiled, looked like funereal figures in the glorious sunshine. Mrs. Raymond waited within the door to

receive the widow, her three young daughters by her, longing to be kind to their cousins, who had lost their papa. The first few moments were speechlessly painful ; but they got over, and Mrs. Wynyard revived to find herself with Mrs. Raymond and Anna alone in the room that was to be hers. Missing Lois, she inquired for her, and was told that Louy and Mary and Bab had carried her off already to see their gardens. The governess had given them holiday from their lessons, that they might make her at home amongst them forthwith, by introducing her to their play-work and their pets.

When three or four days had passed from their arrival, Anna and Lois began to think Eskford a very pleasant house to stay at. The neighbourhood was rich in young people, who were always coming and going, getting up some diversion for before lunch or after lunch, bringing club-books to exchange, or initiating each other into the mysteries of the then novel garden-game of croquet. Philip Raymond was exceedingly good-humoured, and gave himself up to making his cousin Anna's visit agreeable to her.

He was a gay, auburn-haired, blue-eyed young man, of four or five and twenty, generously disposed, and well-liked by all his many friends. He charmed Anna without an effort; and once he had seen her handsome eyes droop softly beneath his, he was charmed too. "My father said she was a wearisome girl—I don't find her wearisome at all," thought he.

And Anna really was not wearisome when she brightened. Sometimes of an evening her mother watched her with wistful, pleased surprise, marvelling whence came the change. Her countenance would kindle as with hidden fire, then her mouth grew tender, and her eyes gloriously dark and brilliant. When the excitement passed, it left her sweetly placid and pretty. Her dress that she had always hitherto worn with negligent neatness, was now more carefully put on, and she discovered that the dead black of her evening dress threw out the creamy delicacy of her smooth neck and arms. One night she put a string of jet beads, suspending a cross, round her throat, and the effect was resplendent. When she appeared in the drawing-room, the old Squire professed to be quite dazzled, and asked if it

was Anna. The next afternoon, being in the greenhouse with Philip, he cut some lovely sprays from a favourite white heath of his mother's, and gave them to his cousin to wear in her hair. She wore them, and afterwards carefully dried and preserved them amongst the most precious of her treasures.

This was the brightest episode of Anna's life. Notwithstanding all that was so lately passed, and all that was so soon to come, she was happy—beautifully, graciously, unsuspectingly happy. Philip would have been more than mortal if, having accidentally awakened the music in her nature, he had not gone on touching and trying its chords of sweetness. He began without design, and he went on because it was delightful to them both.

How much is loss to a girl, and how much is gain in such a guileless experience? Her cousin Philip gave Anna a few days worth living and worth remembering; a little idle love, a little lazy compassion, and a spray of white heath. The dead flower survived his other offerings, short-lived as it was—perhaps because she watered it with a shower or two of April tears.

Mrs. Wynyard saw without seeing, and heard without understanding. The weather continued fine and genial, and Philip and Anna were much out and about together, both on foot and on horseback. The head of the dale was very beautiful with hanging woods, deep rocky streams and heathery hills, delightful to explore. It was a strange country to Anna as well as a strange life. One radiant day from the ridge of the moor, she espied smoke drifting along the opposite hill-side, and Philip told her the narrow glen between was Arkindale, and that the smoke came from the blast-furnace at the lead-works. Neither Anna nor Lois had been told all the truth of the family misfortunes, and she only said,—“Those works where papa wasted so much money,” and sighed, but without any peculiar sense of shame.

When they returned to the house she found her mother spending the afternoon hour of recreation with the governess, to whose quiet company in the school-room she also often betook herself of an evening, when the drawing-room society was too lively and cheerful for her. Miss Hinton had won her grateful regard by proposing that Lois should share

her cousins' studies as well as their amusements, and the plan had worked admirably. Lois ceased grieving, and was diligent, docile, and happy in her new sphere.

Anna came in blooming with fresh air and exercise, still wearing her hat and habit, and dropping on the sofa by her mother, she gave a glowing account of her ride. That ended, she inquired what *they* had been talking about, shut in over the fire. "About you, Anna, and about the cares and toils of a governess's life, which may, perhaps, be your life, dear, by and by," replied Mrs. Wynyard in a tone of languid regret.

Anna did not answer. She gazed straight before her out of the window at the sunny blue sky; her brows rose, and her mouth fell, and she looked like Anna at Eastwold again. After a minute or two of silence she discovered suddenly that she was tired, and had better go and take off her things. She could not bear to tell the magnificent Philip of this shadow out of the future, which had eclipsed her gaiety, but he detected that she was dull at dinner, and after dinner, she vanished from the drawing-room for all

the rest of the evening, and was understood to have gone to spend it upstairs with Miss Hinton.

Anna had not tried to make the acquaintance of her governess before, but she had now an interest in doing so. She asked her if hers was not an intolerable sort of existence. Miss Hinton inquired in reply, if *she* looked as if it were. "No, you look as if your life suited you. But you heard what mamma said about me this afternoon, and I want you to tell me what a governess feels like."

"That depends very much on her liver. If she is in health and in a comfortable situation she feels that she has much to be thankful for; if she is dyspeptic, she feels hypped, and tired of everything—just as other people do."

"That is not what I mean. I mean as to society and so forth; is she not looked down on, and mortified by slights and discourtesies?"

"How do you regard a governess yourself? If she has the manners of a gentlewoman, and is a good instructress, she carries weight, as all thoroughly capable persons do. She has not much time for society, nor is she apt to be useful or ornamental in

it. The more closely she identifies herself with her work the happier she always is. If you have the slightest prospect before you of becoming a governess, I should advise you to apply yourself to perfecting whatever accomplishments you possess, so as to ensure a superior situation and a liberal salary. I look to money myself; many of us are sadly underpaid. Your knowledge will not disqualify you for a happier lot if it should fall to you—which I hope it will; for you do not strike me as being the kind of girl to harden into a successful working woman.”

“I have no talents. I should never be anything but a drudge; and oh, how I should hate it!” cried Anna.

Miss Hinton quite believed her, and proposed that the disagreeable subject should be dropped. It was dropped, but the idea of what her mother had predicted as possible for her, continued to haunt Anna during many a day and night.

The visit to Eskford came to a close with the month of April, and on a sumptuous May day, Mrs. Wynyard and her girls took their leave of

the hospitable house that had served to break their fall from Eastwold to Norminster. Dr. Philip Raymond and Maurice met them at the station, and conveyed them to their lodgings in the quiet green suburb beyond Aldgate where stood Chassells' school. The assizes were proceeding at the time of their arrival, and the doctor informed his sister-in-law that Mr. Hargrove's trial was to come on the following day. She sighed grievously, and wished they had stayed at Eskford until it was over.

XI.

THE EVENTS OF A DAY.

THE weather seemed as if it were generously resolved to put the best face on the Wynyards' changed fortunes to begin with. Where is May not lovely? Even in the tiny palisaded garden upon which looked the drawing-room of their lodgings, the spring put on its garb of blossom and green with an air of delight. The house was detached, but it was one of many like it, bordering the open suburb of Briggate on the great south road of the coaching days. There was a wide expanse of level ground opposite where the annual races were held, where the yeomanry paraded when they were up for a week's training after harvest, and where the cavalry regiment stationed in the barracks had an occasional field-day. It was quite the pleasantest suburb of Norminster, for it lay high

and dry on a gravelly soil, and almost in the country, combining the conveniences of a cathedral town with the freshness of a rural village.

Dr. Philip Raymond had catered for his kinswomen to the best of his ability, and had secured for them a lodging in this cheerful neighbourhood at a moderate rent. It seemed to the girls very confined at first, but they kept this feeling to themselves, and after their few books, pictures and other ornamental belongings were unpacked and dispersed about the rooms, they put on almost a look of home. The drawing-room proved very manageable. It was on the first floor, and had one large window with pale chintz draperies to correspond with the covers of the furniture. For lightness, brightness, and cleanliness it was all that was desirable, and the little dining parlour behind it served every purpose which might have thrown it into disarray. Above these rooms were two others, the larger of which Lois shared with her mother, while the smaller was appropriated to Anna's sole use; *this* by her own desire. There could be no day-dreaming where her mother was; and the sunniest hours of Anna's present life were

destined to be spent in the pleasant wilderness of fancy.

She took some pains after breakfast to arrange a few flowers which the mistress of the house gave her leave to gather, and when that was finished, the day was all before her, what to do. Lois chose a shelf for her lesson-books, and then she was idle; and after Mrs. Wynyard had written a few letters, she also could fold her hands. No household to govern here, no servants to rule, no orders to give but such as were given in five minutes, while the responsibility of seeing them executed was laid on other shoulders. Mrs. Wynyard, ruefully smiling, said her occupation was gone.

At noon, Maurice came running up from Chassells' to see how they were, and proposed to escort his sisters into the town; but his mother demurred to this, and they took a walk country-wards instead, leaving her indoors alone. If they had gone into the streets then while the courts were sitting, they would have found them empty and silent enough; but soon after three o'clock, when the criminal business of the assizes was concluded by the conviction of

Mr. Hargrove, and his sentence to ten years' penal servitude, they might have lost themselves in the stream of people coming down from the castle in the wake of the sheriff's carriage, and of the decrepid halberdmen who professed to clear its way.

The trial had excited a profound interest, though its result could hardly be doubtful. Nearly all Allan Bridge was present, and nearly all Eskdale, either as witness or audience. When the verdict had been pronounced, and sentence given, a curious little scene ensued. The prisoner, who had borne himself through a harassing day with cool bravado, resisted the motion of the jailors to remove him, saying:—"I have a word to speak." The court, which had begun to rise, waited, the crowd hushed, and the jury became attentive. "It has been implied in evidence that Robert Wynyard, of Eastwold, aided and abetted my frauds. That is not true. He was my victim long before he knew it, and to a much greater extent than is suspected. He was a credulous, indolent man, but no rogue. I frightened* him abroad to make his spoliation the easier, and the more complete. I caused his arrest on his return to gain time for escape

before the discovery that was then become inevitable overtook me. I avow all this publicly for his children's sake—that a dishonoured name may not be entailed on them with their other misfortunes.” A low murmur followed this *amende*, during which a pin might have been heard to drop in the breathless stillness of the court. The prisoner then left the dock, and vanished by a gloomy underground passage from the eyes of the respectable world.

Amongst those who had listened with mingled surprise and satisfaction to the dishonest agent's confession was one of the chief witnesses against him—Mr. John Hutton—who immediately disengaged himself from the throng, called a cab, and drove to Briggate to communicate it to his sister. When he reached the lodgings, he found that Penelope Croft was with her, and that she was already aware of the event. Pennie had come to Norminster for the day with Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone; had heard the trial, the condemnation, and the speech that followed them; she had, moreover, received from Mr. Sam. Hargrove a paper which his brother had entrusted to him after his conviction

to be handed to her. This paper, on which were scrawled a few lines in pencil, Pennie now gave to Mr. John Hutton.

He read and asked, what did it mean ?

“ ‘ The former part of your prayer I can grant. As for any act of restitution, a convicted felon can make no will.’ Was this what he wrote in the dock just after the verdict was delivered ? Had you made some appeal to him then, Pennie ? ”

“ Yes. I don't believe in anybody being altogether bad, and as he could hardly have any malice against those living whom he has wronged, I sent him a letter through his brother, begging him to do what in him lay to clear off the cruel imputations that had been cast on Mr. Wynyard, and to make some deed by which his stolen property, hidden nobody knows where, might be restored to the rightful owners in the event of his not surviving until his servitude expires.”

“ You are as queer as ever, Pennie. Who but you would have dreamed of preferring such a petition to such a man ? You seem, however, to have touched the scoundrel where he was capable of feeling, and

his confession is certainly valuable as far as it goes. These few words too prove that his ill-gotten gains do exist somewhere."

"I trust that his avowal exonerating poor Robert may be printed at length in the newspapers," said Mrs. Wynyard, to whom it had given an inexpressible sense of relief. "It must be sent to Francis and Geoffrey—dear Francis, it will console him as much as it comforts me."

"Let all be lost so honour bide," was the ardent young soldier's first principle, more deeply and dearly felt now than ever, and his mother sympathised with him in it. Her children were not quite impoverished so long as the name they bore was held in good repute; and that night she lay down to rest in greater peace than she had experienced since the heavy day, when the law and death together presented their writs of summons to her ruined, unhappy husband.

Mr. Featherstone called for Penelope Croft in Briggate at five o'clock, and they joined his wife at the railway station ten minutes after. The train by which they were to leave for Kirkgate did not start until half-past, and the interval they spent in a stroll on

the walls which enclose the ancient city of Norminster. On their return to the station, when they had taken their seats in a carriage by themselves, there came to the window with magazines and papers to sell, a shabby lean old man whom Pennie recognized as Pierce, Mr. Tindal's former servant. He knew her too, and looking a little disconcerted, was moving away, when she bade him stop, took a paper, gave him a sovereign and said—that will do. He touched his hat humbly, thankfully, hesitated, and then said : “ Is the master at the Abbey, Miss, and is he well ? ”

“ Yes, Pierce, he is both. Does your daughter still live ? ”

“ She does, and just the same. She'll never be any better in this world.”

The guard sounded his whistle, the train began to move, and Pennie leant back in her corner reflective. This unexpected rencounter had called up troublesome memories, and given her much that was painful to think about. Mr. Tindal had told her that he had quite lost sight of Pierce, and that he feared he might be dead. It seemed, however, that he was now earning a precarious livelihood by one of

the many poor expedients of the wretched, in the town where his unhappy daughter was confined. Pennie furred over the leaves of the magazine she had bought—a cheap illustrated Sunday Magazine it professed to be—but she found nothing in it attractive enough to hold her mind back from its desultory speculations.

“Will the truth ever be revealed? I would it were, I would it were ! ” she thought to herself sometimes.

When she looked the whole matter steadily in face, implicit as was her faith, strong as was her confidence, she could not set her heart *quite* above the wish to have the world's good esteem for the companion of her life, the object of her entire love. She had begun to feel already that the kindness for old friendship's sake which would be extended to her after her marriage would hardly take him in, and would be but a cold substitute for the easy, cordial acquaintance or intimacy of common, everyday life. Recklessly once or twice, when some warning word forced this perception upon her, she had exclaimed : “ We shall be two outcasts instead of one—that is all. He will be saved, and I shall not suffer to death.” But below

all her thoughts, secret or expressed, there lurked the subtle hope that he would regain his place in society, cleared or uncleared. How improbable this was very rarely and very darkly suggested itself to her, and when it came she put it behind her. She had that mental process to go through on the present occasion, and it gave such a solemn look to her face, always in repose pathetic, that her fellow-travellers respected her meditations, and disturbed her with no remarks.

Mr. Featherstone's carriage was waiting at the station when they reached Kirkgate, and Pennie was conveyed in it to her mother's door. The Mayfield garden looked soft and bowery in the May twilight, and there walked Mr. Tindal, watching for her return. She communicated to him briefly the issue of Mr. Hargrove's trial, and then mentioned her meeting with Pierce, describing the old man's poverty-stricken, forlorn appearance.

"Oh, my darling, I wish you had not seen him," replied he. "Let us keep out of that shadow, and live in the sunshine now. I must not have a haunted wife." He had detected the slight tone of despon-

dency in her voice, and embraced the unusual office of cheerer and consoler.

“I am rather tired, but we will walk up and down here for a little while,” said she, and slipped her hand round his arm.

It was a broad grassed path between two rows of espaliers at the end of the garden where they walked, and Mrs. Croft, from the parlour-window, watched them impatiently as they went to and fro. She wanted to hear the news from Norminster, but she did not care to interrupt their colloquy, though something in the *pose* of Pennie’s head and the air altogether caused her to conjecture that it was sad. And to herself, with a woeful sigh, she said that it would not be the last time the poor lass would have a heart-ache because of him, let her love him ever so !

The evening gloomed in fast, and when the widow could hardly discern the two figures in the distance, she went into the porch, and called to Pennie to come in-doors. The respect of tenant for landlord made Mrs. Croft formally civil to Mr. Tindal, but she could not bring herself to treat him with cordiality. The more certain it became that she must have him for

her son-in-law, the more dreadful seemed the disgrace that might some day accrue to her respectable family thereby. Many a long mournful talk over it had she held with Mrs. Jones of Beckby, and Mrs. Lister at the Grange, and abundant condolence and pity had she found in both quarters, but no encouragement to put her fears by, and hope for the best. Often had she watched her daughter's countenance, and studied her moods for signs of doubt and repentance ; but none appeared, and while, in spite of herself, admiring Pennie's staunchness, she would thankfully have seen her change her mind. Pennie was not a great fortune now, as her mother remarked to Mrs. Jones ; but she would have a pretty bit of money at her death, and Haggerston Mill and the little farm were more than most lasses had of their own to marry on. She need not have despaired of getting a decent husband yet ; for she was clever and handy, though she had not been brought up to work.

These thoughts worked in the widow's mind as Mr. Tindal and her daughter approached the garden-door. There they stood several minutes, facing each other, Pennie's hands held fast in his. He was

asking her to tell him when his probation was finally to cease. "My heart and soul weary for you, and there is no reason now for delay," said he.

"May is not counted a fortunate month—my cousin Joanna said so," responded Pennie.

"It is the most fortunate of months, but she wished to be married in April. You almost promised, and Rhineland is lovely in May."

Pennie had no valid plea further to allege. Her preparations, such as they were, were completed, and when she went in to her mother, she told her that Tuesday in the following week was to be their marriage-day.

"If it is to be, I shall be glad when it is done," replied the widow. "I hope, Pennie, you'll not live to repent it."

"I pray God not," said Pennie; and after standing a few minutes looking out at the gloomy sky, she retreated to the quiet of her own room.

XII.

A MORNING IN MAY.

THE few days' interval was not very happy for poor Pennie. She had never one moment's temptation to draw back from her pledge to Mr. Tindal, but many a time suddenly her heart sank as she thought of her marriage so near, and still so obnoxious to her friends. Mrs. Wynyard heard with relief that it was to be private, thankful to escape the pain of refusing to let her girls officiate as bridesmaids to their almost sister, which, from the first, she was resolved they should not do. Mrs. Lister showed the same regard for her Lucy ; and Pennie understood, before the day came, that nobody would stand by her during the few minutes in church, except him to whom she was plighted till death should them part. Not one of

her kinsfolk would be present, and not one of her friends.

Her uncle Lister alone spoke her kindly : " I should like to give thee away, lass ; but the wife has a bad opinion o' the match, an' she won't hear of it," said he.

Pennie called pride to her aid, and replied, " I shall soon be in need of none of you ! "

But she shed some hot tears that night alone. There was an obtrusive resolution amongst her own people to have neither act nor part in her marriage, and if she would carry it through, to let her carry it through on her own sole responsibility. Having acquitted their consciences by this strong protest, it was possible that they might make it a duty to rally round her afterwards ; but she had the wisdom not to expect much from friendliness based on that foundation. Her heart was wrung, but her love, her pride, and her invincible sense of justice kept her up ; and whatever pain she felt, she betrayed none to him whom it would have stabbed much more cruelly than any wound they could inflict on her.

The night before her marriage Pennie kissed her

mother at bed-time more tenderly than usual, and the widow understanding it, said, "Thou doesn't mean to see me in the morning then, Pennie?"

"No, mother; this is good-night and good-by. It will be rather lonesome walking across the field to church by myself; but there are harder things happening every day—girls going with troops of friends to be married to men they don't love—but I shall be going to be married to one I love heartily, and who loves me. I have no fear of not being happy, though nobody wishes me God speed."

"I do wish thee God speed, go where thou wilt, and do what thou wilt," replied her mother, and began to cry. She was not deceived by Pennie's confident words, true though they were: a look in her eyes and a tone in her voice cut deeper than any reproach. As the widow would have expressed it, Pennie always got over her by her patience; and the tears she now copiously shed promised relenting. "Won't Morrison walk with you, Pennie?" asked she, sobbing. "Surely never went daughter from her mother's house as you'll go. It's heart-breaking to think of. And such a pretty wedding as your

cousin Joanna had too. I call it downright mortifying, that I do."

"It is not too late now to reverse your own intentions, mother. I am sure you will feel more comfortable when I am gone, if you have it to remember that you saw me off," said Pennie.

"There's no comfort in it any way. Money's not everything in the world, and it isn't the main thing, as you'll find to your cost. It is in Mr. Tindal's favour that he's stuck to you since you lost your fine fortun'; but I'd rather ha' kept you at home, though you'd never married at all."

Pennie made no answer—what answer could she make? It was only the old argument over again. She kissed her mother once more, and then escaped to her room. But she thought to herself, and she even said so to Morrison, whom she found finishing her packing, that she hoped, after all, her mother would accompany her to church. And the expectation was not deceived. When Pennie went downstairs early in the morning, dressed in the white piqué dress, that might have served more appropriately for a hay-making party than for her wedding,

she found her mother making breakfast in her Sunday ruby satinette gown. The best china was on the table, and the old silver service, the widow's most precious possession.

Mrs. Croft looked round half shyly, half curiously, at her daughter as she entered, and said, in a voice where affected sharpness struggled with real feeling : " Sit thee down, lass, and let us get it over. I carried thee to thy christening, and if it was thy burying, I should follow ; so I suppose I must go to thy marrying, though I don't like it."

Pennie smiling, kissed her, and said she knew she would.

" Your aunt Lister 'ull tell me I never know my own mind two minutes together. Now, Pennie, you'll oblige me by eating a good breakfast, that's what you'll do. What are you going to wear on your head ? "

" My Leghorn hat."

" Hum—I can't say but I think you look as nice as your cousin Joanna in all her finery. That's pretty white stuff your frock's made of ; but you'll not travel by rail like that ? "

“We are not going to travel by rail to-day.”

“You don’t mean to say you’re stopping at the Abbey?”

“No; we are going to Kirkfell.” Kirkfell was, as Mrs. Croft knew, a small moorland estate belonging to Mr. Tindal, about twenty miles north-west of Eskdale—in the Lake country, in fact.

“It is a sweet spot, Kirkfell,” said she; “not a long ways off Ambleside, where I went to school. You won’t forget me with letters, Pennie, every week. Nobody but a mother knows what a mother’s anxiousness is. And I think you’ll grant me this, love, that I have more cause than most to feel it.”

“I will write to you twice or thrice a week, if it will be any consolation.”

“Nay, there’s no call for that; when folks is moving about, they can’t always have a pen in their hands. Only let me hear as reg’lar as you can. I should like you to drink another cup o’ coffee. Oh! Pennie, there’s Mr. Tindal himself. What business has he coming here now—did you bid him?”

“No; but I daresay he did not like the idea of my walking across the fields alone.” She coloured

with pleasure, and when Betsy demurely ushered him into the parlour, he saw her with the pretty, improving blush unfaded. Mrs. Croft reddened also, and was not at her ease, though she suffered Mr. Tindal to take her hand.

"I think no better of it than ever I did," said she, in self-assertion.

"I hope some day you will think better of it," was his reply, and he turned to Pennie with a kind protective air.

"My mother was coming to church with me," said she.

"I am glad of it; she will come to church with both of us; it will not feel so much like running away, will it, Pennie, though the witnesses will be few? As soon as you are ready, let us go. I told Featherstone nine o'clock."

"It is not half-past eight yet—there's no hurry," said the widow.

"There are the settlements to sign first. As nobody looked after Pennie's interest, I have seen to them myself, and the lawyer is waiting at the lodge now for the completion of the deeds. I have ordered

the names of her uncle Lister and her cousin Richard to be inserted as her trustees, and they have promised me that they will act if ever they are called upon."

"I never gave no thought to settlements; but, of course, it is right. I've no doubt, Mr. Tindal, you mean to do your duty by the lass, and you'd need, for she's trusting you as ne'er another woman in Eskdale would."

Mr. Tindal looked at Pennie, and she looked at him, and there was no necessity for asseverations. Between them her mother saw there was perfect understanding and perfect confidence.

The walk across the fields was rather silent, but it was not sad. Pennie had plucked up her spirits, and May never shone more auspiciously than on her marriage morning. A little hand-gate, nearly opposite to the Abbey, brought them out into the road, and a minute after they were in the lodge, where waited Mr. Tindal's lawyer from Norminster, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Lister, and his son Dick, with the deeds on the deal table that furnished the rustic abode. The signing was not an affair of many minutes, and immediately it was accomplished the

little party crossed to the church, where Mr. Featherstone and the clerk were in attendance. Mr. Lister and Dick stayed near the door to witness the ceremony, and to the surprise of both, and of herself perhaps also, when the clergyman asked who gave Penelope Croft to be married to Arthur Tindal, her mother, in a voice exalted by agitation, said she did. The service went on smoothly to the end, the register was signed, and as they went down the aisle together Mr. Tindal established Pennie's hand more firmly on his arm, and whispered, "*Mine*, at last, *mine* until death us do part."

At the churchyard-gate was drawn up a travelling-carriage, in the rumble of which sat Morrison, side by side with Pierce's successor at the Abbey. Before getting in, Pennie kissed her mother long and closely, and was bidden to go her way for a wilful, wilful lass, but not in a tone to grieve her. The natural excitement of the event had lifted the widow out of herself, and for the moment everything but the event was forgotten.

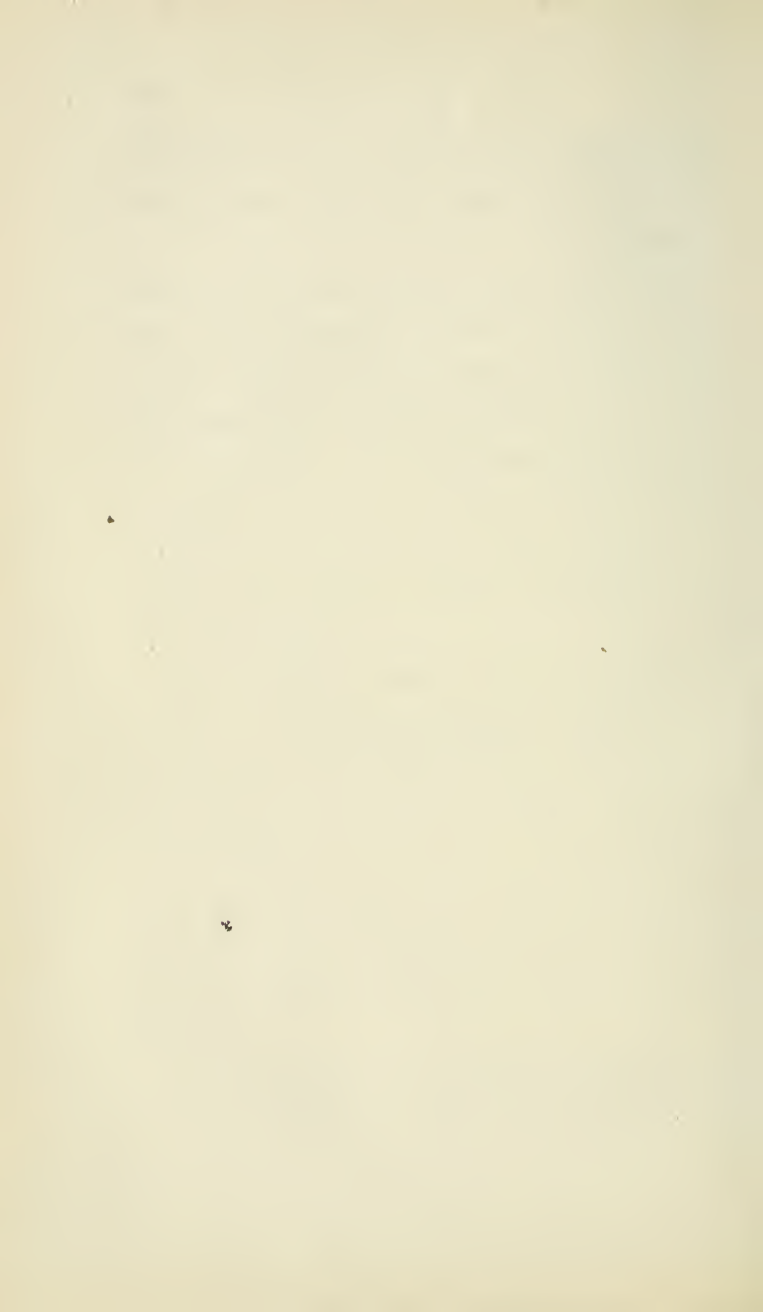
"I shall go back to the Grange with your uncle Lister and Dick to talk it over," added she; and Pennie

encouraged her to do so, and to spend the day there, knowing what a comfort *talking over* always was to her mother.

Then the carriage-door was closed, some one said all was right, and the horses began to move. Mr. Tindal drew Pennie close to him—"Now," said he, in a tone of exultant tenderness, "I shall never again be alone in the world!"

END OF PART II.





MR. WYNWARD'S WARD.

. PART III.



I.

NORMINSTER SOCIETY.

SOCIETY at Norminster was full of delicate gradations. Not many rich people lived there, and not many distinguished, but there existed a considerable permanent population of gentry, ascending by visible steps from the municipal dignities who were chiefly dissenters, and in trade, to his grace, the bishop, and his eccentric honour, the Earl of Eden, who occupied a dingy mansion in the Minster-yard. The community was strong in dowagers of the church and army, in spinsters of means, and spinsters of youth and beauty, but in men to marry them it was weak and decidedly wanting. The young divines, who looked so nice at evening parties, had nearly all nothing ; the young officers who set off the ball-room so charmingly, had nearly all less than nothing. It was gravely

remarked during the past winter, when the garland of pretty girls was even more than usually gay, that there was only one eligible match in society—only *one*—a sallow, dapper brewer, still young at five-and-thirty, who had succeeded to the business which had enriched his family for three generations, and was reaping to his sole harvest the gains that had hitherto been divided by three partners. It was the many-daughtered matrons who admired Mr. Clarkson—not the daughters themselves, unless they were roses that had bloomed and blushed through several fruitless seasons.

Mr. Clarkson lived in a handsome house which his father had built, about five minutes' walk beyond the villa where Mrs. Wynyard lodged with her girls. It was his custom to go down to his office in the town about twelve o'clock, when Anna and Lois were usually setting forth for a walk, accompanied by an elderly governess, who came to give them lessons during the day. A small terrier, delightfully ugly and queer, which answered to the name of Snap, invariably attended him, and after a few meetings the dog and Lois formed a speaking acquaintance.

Anna carried her head in the air, and never condescended to notice the grave, insignificant gentleman, who treated himself to a stare of respectful admiration whenever they encountered. She knew all their immediate neighbours by their landlady's report to her mother, and he had been pointed out as "Clarkson, the rich brewer," a description far too prosaic to awaken in her the very slightest interest.

Next door to them, on the right, dwelt Mr. Bingley, a well-to-do, well-looking hosier, of the Independent persuasion, the possessor of an exceedingly fair wife, and of three of the neatest, rosiest little boys in Norminster. Next door to them, on the left, dwelt the childless widow of a deceased minor canon, with whom lived her nephew, the very handsome, able, popular, poor parish curate of St. Jude's, of which Dr. Philip Raymond was rector.

Fifty paces lower down on the opposite side of the way, in a large, old-fashioned, bow-windowed house, resided Mr. Ferguson, a barrister and a widower, with his daughters—commonly called the Ferguson girls. They were four, all nearly of a height, and all dressed alike, and as they walked abroad in pairs

only—one pair going out when the other pair went in—they had the effect of parading Norminster streets a good deal. They were nice girls and clever—one sang, one etched, one read, and one was domestic and pretty. They called on Mrs. Wynyard with an introduction from Mrs. Featherstone, who was their eldest sister, and attempted to get up a friendship with Anna; but Anna was reserved, and they did not make very promising progress. The Martin girls—the two dashing daughters of Colonel and Mrs. Martin, had no better success, and in talking her over with the Ferguson girls, she was pronounced dull and excessively proud. The colonel's dandy son said she was a fine figure of a girl, but deuced cold; and before she had been many weeks in Briggate she was perfectly well known by sight and name to the idle strollers of an afternoon between her home and the Minster, whither she established a practice of going to evening prayers with Lois three or four times a week—for the sake of the music.

Before midsummer Anna had settled into her new groove quite contentedly. She even liked it. It

was much more cheerful than Eastwold. Pressing anxieties were past: no misfortune to come menaced them. Her mother's means were small, but luxury had long been too strange to be felt as a need. Nobody around them was ostentatiously splendid, and Anna discovered that she had only to wish for agreeable society to have it. Dr. Philip Raymond made his kinswomen acquainted with friends of his own; and by-and-by, when Anna marched stately down Bleak Street—the Pall Mall of Norminster—with Lois beside her, many hats were lifted in acknowledgment of her serene bow, and many ladies smiled on her a formal recognition. But at present it was not Anna's whim—or policy—to be intimate with any; and no one got beyond the respectful sort of criticism which defined her as handsome, haughty, and hard to know. No one professed to have any familiar idea of her whatever. She might have lived to be thirty in Briggate, and the most free-and-easy of men would never have presumed to class her in the same category with the popular Ferguson girls, or the fashionable Martin girls. Without any specific design, Anna contrived to surround herself with a

cool atmosphere of distinction and exclusiveness, which to certain minds gave her a peculiar attraction.

Mrs. Wynyard saw and approved. She wished Anna to marry. If she did not marry there was nothing but dependence or work before her; for the provision the widow now enjoyed was contributed by her sisters and brothers, and would cease partially, if not wholly, at her death.

Wishing Anna to marry, Mrs. Wynyard, as she became at home in Norminster, naturally endeavoured to make her drawing-room pleasant to a few select friends. The sociable custom of kettle-drum did not then prevail, but she set the fashion. Tea and coffee in old silver and old china were cheap and choice there any day from five to half-past six in summer; and often, when Anna and Lois returned from the Minster service, they found mamma holding conversation with the exquisite Captain Martin and a sister, with a Ferguson girl or two, with the reverend young Mr. Scrope, and by-and-by with higher dignities from the rarefied atmosphere of the Minster Yard, introduced by Dr. Philip Raymond.

It was understood that no evening invitations

could be accepted for Anna until the first year of her mourning for her father had expired, though her mother did not object to her joining occasional garden parties for croquet or archery in the mornings, if she liked. But Anna did not often like. Indeed, she was so calmly indifferent to the amusements and company suited to her age, that other girls began shrewdly to suspect that she must be in love with somebody who was not to be met with in Norminster gardens and parlours. It may be admitted that this idea was not altogether without foundation. Anna liked to dream of Eskford better than to play at any game, or to engage in any diversion in any company.

Early in July, Bleak Street grew annually desolate, and everybody in Norminster who could afford it fled to the sea-side—to Filey, Burlington, Redcar, Scarborough, or Whitby. Dr. Philip Raymond went to Whitby, and carried Maurice with him. He invited his sister-in-law and the girls to accompany them; but Mrs. Wynyard knew his income, and the tax she was on it already, and firmly declined. Lois was severely disappointed, for she had looked forward to being with Maurice in the holidays;

Anna, who knew such self-denial must be practised, saw the prospect vanish without a murmur, though not without mortification, when she had to reply to Bella Martin's question where they were going for sea air, that they were going nowhere. Soon after the Martins, Mr. Clarkson, Mrs. Bingley and her boys, and all the Fergusons disappeared from Brig-gate; and when Anna took her usual way of an afternoon through the sultry streets to Minster, she missed the gossiping groups that were wont to assemble about the door of Liversedge's Library, and encountered instead vacant captains lounging companionless from dreary barrack to deserted club, and back again; and dusty, unbeneficed clerics, of the laborious type, left to do the work of rectors and canons, gone into breezy retreat.

During the first week of August all the world began to return for the two days' races and the ball which preceded a second but lesser exodus to the moors. The Ferguson girls would on no account have missed the Race Ball, which was invariably charming—only one degree less charming than the Hunt Ball, which befel in October. They drove up

to their own door one evening just as Mrs. Wynyard, Anna, and Lois were passing on their return from a walk; and of course there was a greeting, and a rapid gush of questions and answers. Had the Martins come back, had poor Mr. Scrope been able to get away, had Anna seen Mr. Clarkson yet? *They* had enjoyed themselves *so* much; Scarborough was *so* gay; the esplanade was *so* delightful; and there was a concert or a ball every week at least. They did not, however, look any the fresher for their sea-breezes, and the pretty domestic one said, Scarborough might be very nice, but for her part she was glad to be at home, where they had space to move indoors as well as out. She did not like lodgings.

Minnie Ferguson meant no harm by saying she did not like lodgings, but Anna felt her colour rise, and fancied it was a spit at her, whose home was in lodgings. She went to her own room, which was as pretty as any girl's own room need to be, and threw off her hat in a pettish mood, sighing audibly for a richer and freer lot than seemed ever likely to fall to her share. Then her thoughts turned to Eskford, to Philip Raymond, and the

spray of white heather, which she always looked at when she was a little melancholy. Oh, those pleasant days! those pleasant nights! Would they come again? Would they ever come again, or were they of those joys which have no renewal.

II.

THE VANISHING OF A DREAM.

DURING the next few days Anna speculated much within her own mind whether the races would bring her cousin Philip to Norminster; but conscious of feeling more interest in the possibility than she was supposed to feel in anything concerning him, she did not inquire, lest she should betray it. She endured—or enjoyed—in consequence, a long uncertainty, which a word to the doctor would have done away. Philip was, in fact, gone to Paris for the August fêtes, and while she watched from the window every comer to the gate during those two noisy dusty days in Briggate, he was taking his ease at the *Hôtel du Louvre*, or sauntering and broiling in the white heat of the *Place de Concorde*, the *Champ de Mars*, or the *Rue Rivoli*. She had no share in the festivities

of the time, and was therefore relieved when the bustle was over, and the suburb restored to its normal drowsy quiet. She had done with expectation then, and disappointment likes to be still.

But before the end of the month hope revived again. The yeomanry cavalry were to muster for their annual week's training on Saturday, the third of September; and as Philip Raymond was captain of the Eskdale troop, he was sure to come to Norminster with his men. On that memorable Saturday both Anna and Lois stayed at home, and found entertainment enough in watching the jovial pairs and trios and little cavalcades that came riding in from the country districts south of the town; all in glittering, clinking, hussar array, moustached and bronzed like veritable men of war. There were veterans who had grown grey in forty years of peaceful drill, sitting square and solid on chargers fresh from the harvest-wain, and sons of such veterans, broad-shouldered Strongithearms; men like those who drew, of old, the best bow in Europe, and won the most famous fields of mediæval story.

About noon the whole regiment, headed by its

colonel, the Earl of Marchmont, rode out of the town in good order, with music playing, to the race-ground. Anna did not fail to recognize her cousin Philip at a glance, mounted on his gallant *Sorrel*. In the ranks of his troop were Lister of Rood, and Dick his son, Bobby Clough, a vainer beau-bachelor than ever when he put on his uniform ; Mr. Gaskill, grown portentously big and burly, and many familiar Eskdale faces besides. Then Lois cried out that she saw her uncle, John Hutton, and dear old uncle Christopher, and presently after Anna discerned the stalwart figure of Michael Forrester, and next Sir Andrew Goodwin. Briggate was like a fair until they had all gone by, when for an hour or two it became quiet and deserted. But at three o'clock they came back again, breaking their ranks, and dropping off to "The White Horse," or "The Black Horse," or "The Falcon," or "The Rising Sun," where they were billeted in parties ; and Anna, again on the watch, saw uncle John and uncle Christopher give their horses to hold to men of their troop—grooms at Brackenfield—and cross the road towards the gate. In a few seconds they were in the drawing-

room, dusty and dry, congratulating the girls on having such a gay glimpse of the world from their window, and hearing and telling the family news.

Uncle John announced that the Squire and the dame were coming into Norminster on Monday, and that his wife Theodora, Lady Goodwin and Mrs. Forrester had already arrived, and were in lodgings here and there, intending to stay the week over. Uncle Christopher, who was still given to teasing young folks, soon saw that Anna, while professing to share in the family talk, had more than half her attention disengaged and directed to the street, where the men who had their quarters in the town, or in other suburbs of it, were still riding by. "What knight is my lady watching for?" said he in a half whisper, leaning his fine old grey head forward, and peering past her down at the throng.

Just at that moment, Philip Raymond came in sight, looked up, and waved his hand to Lois who was perched in the balcony. He did not appear to see those beyond, within the room, and rode forward in earnest conversation with another officer, whom Anna recognized as Mr. Dent, an opulent young

country gentleman who had married during the previous spring, the second daughter of Mrs. Lefevre, a widow lady of distinguished rank residing in the Minster-yard,—married her, as the censorious and envious were pleased to say, out of the nursery. She was lovely, as all her mother's daughters were, but had not sixpence; and in making this excellent and early match, she had only followed the example of her elder sister who had appeared at her first ball two years ago as a bride—Lady Stapylton, of Haxby Park.

“Did you see cousin Philip, Anna?” Lois asked when he had gone by. Anna smiled and said, Yes, she had seen him, and in spite of her efforts at indifference, her colour rose and fell, and there was a flutter of feeling about her lips.

Uncle Christopher, meaning to be very kind, inquired if she would like to take a walk into the town to see the stir: No, she said, she did not care about it,—she would rather not; and the old man in his own mind thought her dull and uninteresting, as did so many others amongst her friends and acquaintance. Her uncle John had heard the pro-

posal and the reply, and turning round from his sister, who had been giving him some account of her boys, he said: "Nonsense, Anna,—what does don't care mean? I came in on purpose—your aunt Theodora told me to be sure and take you to her this afternoon, and your aunt Millicent will look for you too."

"May *I* go?" cried Lois. Uncle Christopher said, of course she might; and when they set forth from the lodgings, he let Anna walk on first with her uncle John, and took Lois for his own little companion.

Norminster was never so gay, so merry, or so bright as in the week when the yeomanry were up. The men had such joyous, unsophisticated ways of going about, shouting their jokes one to another across the streets, and standing round the doors of their quarters in picturesque groups, looking quite martial and splendid. But the scene of all was the guard-room opposite the colonel's lodging in Bleak Street. Every half-hour a dozen men would turn out, stand in a row at the edge of the flags, draw their swords, face up the street, face down the street,

and then turn in again, leaving one behind to play sentry by trudging up and down with his weapon over his shoulder. The fattest and shyest seemed usually to be put on this conspicuous duty, a gaze to little derisive boys, and a wonder to unaccustomed nursemaids.

Anna was not talkative by the way, but her uncle John took a furtive observation of her, and found that if she was rather heavy in hand — conversationally speaking—her appearance, at least, was satisfactory to his taste. So also was it to her aunt Theodora's, to whose care he made her over, alleging that he had some business at the saddler's and elsewhere, not amusing to ladies, and they had therefore better take their own way under uncle Christopher's escort. This being agreed to, aunt Millicent was called for at the next house but one, and they made a party to go to Liversedge's library on the pretence of buying envelopes ; for everybody bought something on going into Liversedge's, though they went really to see the company that was sure to assemble there, at and after four o'clock. Anna would fain have escaped, but her aunt Theodora refused to understand her hints about

going to Minster prayers. "My dear child, you can go to Minster prayers every day," said she; "but you cannot see me every day. I want to tell you all about Brackenfield, and I want to hear all about yourself. How do you like living in Norminster? Have you many nice friends?" Anna replied in her listless, provoking way that they knew plenty of people, but none that she cared much about.

"You should try to care about them, dear. It seems like affectation in a girl to profess indifference about everybody and everything." No sooner had the words passed aunt Theodora's lips than she perceived that she had overshot the mark, and that her quiet, passive companion was by no means indifferent to everybody and everything. She regretted having spoken so hastily; for a wave of emotion came and went painfully over Anna's face, and she swerved as if to turn another way, evidently to avoid a second large party who, emerging from Eastgate, were about to cross the square at the same moment as themselves.

Foremost of this party was a lady neither young nor old, beautiful in a soft, faded style, and beautifully

dressed in black and grey—Mrs. Lefevre. Attending on her with visible self-satisfaction was Philip Raymond, looking exceedingly handsome and happy. It was when Anna caught sight of him that aunt Theodora had been struck by her attempt at digression, which she very properly frustrated. Close behind followed Lady Stapylton and Mrs. Dent, the youthful matrons, Mrs. Lefevre's daughters, fair, plump, sunny-eyed women, copies of their mother in brighter tints. Behind them again were two younger sisters in the simple attire of girls uncome-out—lilac gingham dresses and capes, and Leghorn hats with straw-coloured ribbons,—pictures of freshness and purity.

There was a pause at the corner of the square, and a general, lively exchange of greetings, in which her cousin Philip shook hands with Anna, and made due inquiries after Mrs. Wynyard. Anna was rather confused, and short in her replies, and after a word with Lois, the gallant hussar stood back, and spoke to Mabel Lefevre, the taller and elder of the two girls, not introduced. As he looked down at her, she looked up to him, and both smiling, blushed. Anna

saw it. Mabel had a face as lovely as ever inspired a poet's song, and eyes large, limpid, and childlike, that in every glance pleaded for tenderness. Anna could hardly withdraw her gaze from this countenance, as angelic in expression as it was perfect in feature and colouring.

The conversation of the young matrons turned on flower-shows, concerts, and balls that were to be in the course of the week, and after a minute or two, somebody having discovered that they were all going by the same road to Liversedge's library, they proceeded, pairing off now so as to let Philip Raymond walk by Mabel. Anna was left last in the file, and alone as it happened, for Lois had joined hands with Mabel's little sister Jean, and uncle Christopher was marching on in advance with Lady Stapylton—a charming woman to his mind, charming as the women of his youth.

Anna felt herself outside of all this cheerful, graceful company. Philip, preoccupied, had only spoken to her like anybody else—coolly, kindly, carelessly, and was lost to her now in the contemplation of that divine face under the Leghorn hat. This

was all that had come of her long looking-forward to a meeting with him again. Those happy days at Eskford, so dearly treasured by her, for any remembrance that he kept of them, might as well never have been. It was like a sudden awaking out of sleep, and the vanishing of a pleasant dream.

Her aunt Theodora looked back once, and thought, "Poor Anna!" and when they reached the library, and found more and more acquaintances to talk to, she contrived to whisper to her that if she liked to come away, and bring Lois, they would go and do some shopping at the draper's. Anna was only too glad, and they went off together unobserved. The draper's brought them half the distance back to Briggate, and when aunt Theodora had done her purchases, Anna suggested returning home. She was tired, and longing to give way to her weakness and weariness. Aunt Theodora consented.

When Anna and Lois reached home, they found on the parlour-table a light chip box, full of the most exquisite flowers. It had come in a hamper of good things from Eskford, and was evidence that

some one there had not forgotten her love for flowers. Was it cousin Philip? Catching at this straw, Anna's spirits revived. The sight and scent of their beauty and fragrance exhilarated her, and she began at once to please herself in dressing the drawing-room vases, while she answered her mother's inquiries about her aunts whom she had seen in the town. On the morrow in the afternoon, Lady Goodwin and Mrs. Forrester walked out to Briggate with Sir Andrew, sent him on for further exercise, and stayed themselves with the widowed sister until nearly the hour of Minster prayers, when he returned to escort them thither. Before they left, Anna was promised a concert on the following evening, and a flower-show on Tuesday, to which one or another of her aunts was to take her. She was afraid of the ordeal she might be put through in encountering her cousin Philip again, yet she could not bear to deny herself the chance of his being kind as he was at Eskford.

Philip Raymond did not make time to come up to Briggate in the interval, but he appeared at the concert, and asked somebody else to move that he might sit by Anna. She was looking very handsome

in her dignified style, and having no present fascination to distract his eyes or his thoughts, he made the evening very pleasant to her. She asked herself pathetically, could she be to blame for liking him when he was so kind?

Squire Hutton and the dame had arrived at the Station Hotel that morning, and had taken up their quarters in a spacious room whither flocked to luncheon, before the flower-show on Tuesday, all their sons and daughters and grandchildren who were in Norminster. Family reunions were less frequent at Brackenfield now that each branch of the family was increasing, and, as in the case of the young Wynyards, scattering abroad. But Maurice came from Chassell's, and his mother and sisters showed their deep mourning for an hour or two amongst their kinsfolks, dressed all splendidly for the gaudy day in the gardens where the flower-show was to be held. The eldest boy from Brackenfield was there, and Lady Goodwin's little girl; but Millicent Forrester left her nursery at home, and Mrs. Blake was residing with hers in the neighbourhood of Southampton during the captain's absence in China.

Anna had never seen some of these her relations since that famous Christmas at Brackenfield from which she and her brother dated the beginning of the troubles at Eastwold. The recollection of all that had come and gone between then and now kept her silent during the feast, but her aunt Theodora screened her from question or rebuke, and when the party set out for the gardens, she took her kindly under her own wing.

In the crowded tent where the flowers were arranged for inspection, Anna clung close to her protectress, until, overpowered by the heat and the heavy perfumes, she was obliged to seek relief in the open gardens, where the youth and fashion of the town and county were disporting themselves, and making a gayer show than that they came to see. Most brilliant where all were brilliant was the group surrounding Mrs. Lefevre and her daughters. Anna saw them from the distance approaching, her cousin Philip, and three or four other gentlemen in uniform, in attendance. Her aunt Theodora saw them too, and without any apparent design, proposed resting a while under the shade of a clump of trees, where

seats had been placed, a little withdrawn from the favourite promenade. Anna acquiesced, and from this post of vantage, she watched the party pass and repass several times ; observing, herself unobserved, that Philip was in constant conversation with Mabel, whose divine face looked no whit less divine for its shy smiles and happy blushes.

Presently aunt Theodora began a little speech, not without double meaning. "What a fortunate woman with her daughters is Mrs. Lefevre ! One married to Sir Edmund Stapylton, another to Robert Dent, and now a third, Mabel, engaged to Mr. Philip Raymond. I should call that the best match of the three. He stayed a week with her in the house at Haxby, and fell in love past praying for. She is as sweet as she is pretty—indeed, they are all nice girls."

Anna perfectly understood that this was spoken with intention. She answered discreetly : "Is that Mabel with whom cousin Philip is walking ? It is the loveliest face I ever beheld, and it looks good."

"Yes. She will be seventeen in a few weeks, and they are to be married before Christmas. Mrs.

Lefevre says she has never enjoyed the pleasure of introducing a daughter ; one after the other, they have all come out as brides. Of course, when she complains so, she feels proud too. She has only little Jean left now, who pretends to the distinction of being the ugly sister ; but, indeed, she is prettier than nine girls out of every ten one meets in the world."

The sudden striking up of the band relieved Anna from the necessity of reply. She was known in her own family not to care for talk when there was music to listen to. The piece played was a fantasia on airs in the opera of Robert le Diable, and that sad appeal, " Oh ! Robert, toi que j'aime ! " echoed in Anna's ears and Anna's heart long and long after, with the thrill of real pain. She did not leave her retired seat until her cousin Philip and his friends had vanished from the gardens, and aunt Theodora stayed by her patiently, helping her to " get over " it, as she said to herself.

Anna would never tell her grief, she knew, but she knew also that it was cruel to let her nurse a secret false hope ; so she had spoken and killed it,

When the poor girl went home in the evening, she laid her dead out, and looked at it; loved it for its pale beauty; in the night wept over it, and in the morning buried it out of her sight. No one but her aunt Theodora ever suspected how fond Anna had been of her cousin Philip.

III.

AT HOME AT ROOD ABBEY.

WHEN Mr. Tindal and his wife returned to Eskdale from their marriage-tour on the Continent, the leaves were changing and falling. October had begun, and an early shower of snow marked the day of their coming home. There had been some talk of spending the winter in Italy; but the inclination of both was rather towards the Abbey, and while they were still hesitating, a little complaint of loneliness from Mayfield turned their decision in favour of England. The church-bells had been set a-ringing by the clerk on his own responsibility, but no display of garlands or flags had been prepared to welcome them to the Abbey; for Mr. Tindal had intimated to Mr. Roberts that he desired no greater demonstration to be made over bringing his young wife home than

had been made over carrying her away. Pennie missed nothing. It was dusk when they arrived, and as her husband conducted her into the pretty green drawing-room, where once, in her maiden-days, she had visited him in his affliction, she looked as bright, as happy, and as complacent as it was possible for woman to look; and with the utmost cheerfulness she said: "Oh, I am glad to be at home! And, Arthur, this is so charmingly home-like."

"You will make a real home of it once more, Pennie," responded he, and kissed her.

When she went upstairs to her own room, she found a perfect bower of comfort and elegance, with a window looking over to Mayfield and the moors, and another compassing the shady twilight garden. There were many signs about it that her tastes had been studied and considered. The pictures on the walls were sunny, the carpet and draperies were of light and lively tints. Pennie had no love for sombre splendour; she preferred that inanimate things should wear a cheerful aspect around her, and appear fresh, unhaunted. She thanked Mr. Tindal for his thoughtfulness in a pretty way she had of thanking

him for everything, as if she were but a loving pensioner on his bounty. He let her do it, since it pleased her to be grateful ; but in his heart he knew, and often with his lips he acknowledged, that her unselfish, tender affection was a recompense for all and more than all he could lavish on her.

A very decided and visible improvement had been wrought in him already by her companionship. They dined alone, and as he stood on the hearth in the drawing-room afterwards, talking to her, ensconced in a low chair, with an Indian screen held up between her face and the fire, she became herself, for the first time, fully aware of its extent. Perhaps seeing her there in his own house, and realizing the fact that she was there for life, completed the charm. Oh ! how forlorn and outcast had he felt in that very spot for days and weeks and months together ? But now his air was satisfied and self-possessed ; his visage was healthy and open ; his whole appearance that of a vigorous, active-minded gentleman, in love with his wife, at ease with himself, and not at variance with the rest of the world. He was feeling strangely content and exhilarated that night. No stranger

would ever have conjectured how long he had lain under a ban—that he lay under it in one sense still. Pennie had convinced him and herself that with time and patience it would wear away. The fanciful distresses that had beset her before her marriage, had dwindled to shadows in the full present light of her happiness, and she had no fear that they would ever resume their former solid proportions. She was prepared to face her little world bravely, and to stand to it that she was already justified in casting in her lot with his ; and no one regarding her could deny that she carried the tokens of justification in her cheerful countenance.

Midway the next morning, while she was walking about the garden with her husband, consulting over prunings and clearings of the shrubberies, long left in the wild luxuriance of nature, Mrs. Croft made her appearance, summoned by a few lines from Pennie, despatched to Mayfield after breakfast. Mr. Tindal gave his mother-in-law a cordial reception, which she was surprised into reciprocating with considerable warmth, betrayed thereto by the bright and favourable aspect of her daughter.

“There is no need to ask how you do, Pennie,” said she, kissing her. “I never saw you look better, and one may tell you’re as happy as the day’s long—not that the days is so very long now. You have stayed away until the best of the year is over. There was a bonnie show of flowers here in the summer.”

There were still a few out, vivid scarlet and rich purple, but yellow leaves were showered thick amongst them, and the branches over head were becoming bare. There was beauty, however, yet in the old garden, with its yews and cedars, and glossy-leaved hollies and laurels; and Pennie replied to her mother that she should still have some pleasure in it before winter arrived. Mr. Tindal presently left them together, and they retreated to the drawing-room for one of those long two-handed chats which the widow so dearly delighted in.

“You and Mr. Tindal look and talk like two happy young folks beginning life in a world of which neither of you knows anything amiss,” said she, as soon as she was comfortably seated near the fire. “I don’t understand it.”

“Nor I quite,” responded Pennie. “But it is true, we are happy.”

“And he is really good to you, and you don’t regret what you have done?”

“Regret it? Not I indeed! I have never had a thought of regret.”

“Thank God for it! I’ve had my doubts—we’ve all had our doubts that it might not be so, Pennie, love; for it was a dreadful risk, as your aunt Lister said; and she has the family credit at heart though she was a Dobbie born.”

“I don’t think she need be anxious for the family credit, mother. Opinions will change.”

“The Lord grant they may! Mr. Tindal looks strong and stout; he hasn’t any bad fits, has he, as if his conscience were overmuch for him sometimes? One has heard strange tales o’ the working of conscience, that it will make a guilty man trouble like the sea, so that he cannot rest. Is he ever like that?”

“Oh, mother, no! what nonsense!” said Pennie with indignation. “Awake he is always as open and easy as you saw him just now, and he sleeps as

peacefully as a child. I know the stories that used to be told of his walking night and day through the house, grinding his teeth and groaning, and I don't believe a word of them."

"Believe them or not, Pennie, they were true enough; but it might be misery and loneliness set him wild, an' not his conscience. It is a pleasure to hear you say he's comfortable in his mind, he couldn't be that and him guilty."

"Mother, we never talk about it. I forget it, and so does he for quite long times together. I wish you would give up thinking about it too. I am fully purposed to have no resuscitation of fears to mar our life. If we have no everyday intimates, we shall exist well enough without them, until it pleases God to set us right with the world. For the present, and I trust for always, we are the best company to each other that can be."

"You have not fretted yourselves while you have been away, that's clear. I make no doubt but you'll have some good neighbours, though Eskdale is not the gay place it used to be. There hasn't been near so much visiting among the gentry since things

began to go wrong at Eastwold, which was about the same time as *that* happened here."

Pennie quietly changed the conversation by challenging her mother's opinion on the decorations of the room they were sitting in. Mrs. Croft said she did not see it much altered since the former Mrs. Tindal's time: and then she asked to see over the rest of the house which had undergone more renovation. Pennie was glad of the active diversion for her mother's thoughts, too prone to recur with anxiety to the past, and during the survey there was found so much that was new to admire and approve, that other interests were forgotten. When it was over the morning was over too, and Mrs. Croft said she had spent as much time from home as she could spare. Pennie, however, made her stay luncheon, and afterwards, going out for a drive with her husband, dropped her at Mayfield garden-door in a very serene and satisfied temper.

Mrs. Jones of Beckby happened to look in on the widow in the course of the afternoon, and during the gossip that ensued, Mrs. Croft proclaimed how nice and pleasant everything seemed at the Abbey, and

described herself as feeling in good heart and hopes about the permanent happiness of her daughter's marriage. Mrs. Jones chimed in with her neighbour's mood, and good-naturedly but inconsistently professed always to have thought well of it.

When Mr. and Mrs. Tindal made their appearance at church on the Sunday morning following their arrival at Rood, they were the objects of much interest and remark. People who remembered the Squire's father noticed that Mr. Arthur was grown exceedingly like him; and everybody in Eskdale knew by experience or tradition that a better man than old Squire Tindal never wore shoeleather. This resemblance had been much less obvious during his gloomy life before his marriage; but now that he was himself again, it came out strongly, and stood both him and his young wife in good stead amongst the humbler folks round the Abbey, who soon learnt also to appreciate their presence there on more substantial grounds. Mr. Tindal had always been a liberal landlord, and he became now a popular one.

The first visitors at Rood were Doctor and Mrs.

Brown, from Eastwold, whose example was promptly followed by Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone. Some other notables of the Dale, amongst whom were Mr. and Mrs. Raymond, of Eskford, and Sir George Bangham also held out a formal hand of conciliation to Mr. Tindal, and their civilities were as formally returned. The Brackenfield circle was beyond the range of morning calls, but Pennie's friends there wrote to her kindly, and promised to see her the first time occasion brought them into the neighbourhood of Rood.

Mr. Tindal met the advances of his equals with some coolness and restraint, and when the ordinary ceremonials had been complied with, he surprised Pennie, and perhaps grieved her a little, by professing himself indifferent to their intimate acquaintance. She refrained from urging him, appreciating the effort it would cost to enter into the little world of Eskdale interests, from which he had been for ten long years secluded, and trusting that the desire to make it would come by-and-by with the power to make it successfully.

An invitation to dine at Eastwold Rectory, where

it was intended they should meet the select few who had paid them the courtesy of a visit, was declined ; and it was then understood that the Rood Abbey people would prefer the formal acknowledgment of their right to a footing in Eskdale society, implied in an exchange of calls and cards, to a more intimate association with their neighbours. Some persons thought this unwise and ungracious ; but others who had anticipated a certain awkwardness in getting on with Mr. Tindal were relieved, and felt that he had taken a prudent course. They confessed that though they would be happy to shake hands with him in the hunting-field, or to give him “good-day” on the road, they were rather diffident about breaking bread with him, and would not heartily relish eating of his salt. They did not believe him guilty—oh, no ! but after all that had been said and done, it was not easy to treat him as an innocent person whose character had never been impeached. The difficulty might wear off in time, but Mr. Tindal was judicious not to force opinion, which would turn in his favour more certainly if he let it alone.

Pennie herself fell into the same way of thinking

by-and-by. Gradual revolutions are the surest. Their position was not what she had hoped, nor what she had proposed, but it seemed quietly to arrange itself, and she was satisfied with the result since her husband preferred it. There was nothing to prevent a change and a widening of intercourse if they desired it after a while, and their retirement challenged much fewer harsh remarks from the adverse party, than any attempt to conquer old prejudices by force would have done.

The lady-part of the community were frequent in their visits to Mrs. Tindal, and took pains to prove their good-will. Her manners were always simple and easy, and as she became better known, the general sentiment was that the master of Rood had luck in his young wife. A few people professed to pity her and fear for her; but the majority marvelled that Mr. Tindal, after the long social outlawry he had endured, was so little spoilt by it, that it was only apparent in a slight reserve and reticence of manner, which quite vanished in her presence. Most men would have been transformed into savages by such an ordeal; would have grown violent, vin-

dictive, hating the world as well as hateful to it. But he had evidently remained sound at heart in his isolation; and now that he had Pennie to trust him, love him, rely on him with all her heart and mind, he could think quite calmly of the wrong done him by the world at large. The fierce anger and passion of it were past, and he could betake himself now in her company to all the active, useful, common-place duties of life with much quiet satisfaction and pleasure.

Divers improvements were possible on his property. Morning after morning found him perambulating his woods and fields with Roberts. Occasionally Pennie was of the party, for she kept up her walking habits and her riding every day, much as when she lived at Eastwold. Though the evenings were spent always alone, they were not tediously spent. Pennie was a bit of capital company to her husband. She had read much for her age, and could respond to good talk. It was not necessary to discuss with her none but purely personal topics, and when it was necessary, she could take a large and sensible view of them. Her husband respected her for her

good sense as much as he loved her for her loveableness, and he depended more on her judgment, and exacted more from her time than anybody but herself knew. It seemed often as though he could decide and do nothing without her. Her inexperience left him many opportunities of instructing her also, and the way in which they were thrown on their own resources at first, developed a community of tastes and sentiments, and lasted long enough to make this community enduring. In all Eskdale there was not a couple more easily or evenly yoked. As weeks went on, and Mrs. Croft's occasions of studying her daughter increased, she acknowledged to her gossips that she was perfectly content for her as things were turning out.

"I could not wish to see her better done to," she assured the still doubting and fearing aunt Lister. "She has all her own way, and is a real good little docile thing. Mr. Tindal's wrapt up in her, but he's master too, as a man should be, in his own house. If it should please God to clear him publicly, then I could die at perfect ease in my mind for her."

Divers advances, gradual but effectual, took place at Rood during the winter months, and soon after the new year began, Pennie had an unexpected treat vouchsafed to her. Millicent Forrester, in reply to a communication of hers, wrote and volunteered a two days' visit from herself and her husband on their way to Methley Towers, and Mr. Tindal gave his wife leave by all means to accept it, if she wished. Pennie was delighted beyond measure at the opportunity and the permission. She longed to see Millicent again on her own account, and she believed that Millicent's husband was the man who, before all others, would appreciate her own husband, and become his friend, if the chance were put in their way.

The event proved that she was discerning, and not too sanguine. The guests arrived only half an hour before dinner, and there was no interval for private talk, but when the four met round the handsomely appointed and perfectly served table, a looker-on, in ignorance of their circumstances, would never have imagined that there was amongst them the shadow of a shade. The popular notion of a house with a skeleton closet was not fulfilled at Rood

that evening. The master was in his pleasantest, least reserved humour, and Michael Forrester's taciturnity disappeared. Travel-talk, once begun, flowed eloquently; and when Pennie carried off Millicent to the drawing-room, the two gentlemen drew their chairs to the fireside, and betook themselves to smoke and sociable conversation, such as never joins except between men who feel intuitively that they shall suit.

When, after long waiting for, they came in to tea, Pennie perceived that the spell which had bound her husband was unloosed. He had tasted the exhilaration of masculine converse to good purpose, and she privately resolved that if she could prevent it, he should not again retreat within himself. As a measure towards its prevention she invited Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone to join their small party the second evening. They expressed themselves as glad to come, and contributed to its pleasantness without any tokens of restraint. Mr. Tindal had some of the best qualities of a popular host, only half developed, it is true, but the rector was well able to appreciate them in the germ, and his round, rosy wife was

always proud and happy to make new and desirable acquaintance such as the Forresters.

These two days were ever after marked with white in Pennie's memory. In this case, as in many others, it was but the first step that cost an effort. A return visit to the lodge ensued, followed by a week at Brackenfield, which Pennie enjoyed excessively. Sir Andrew and Lady Goodwin were staying there at the same time, and the welcome given to Mr. Tindal by the Hutton family, sufficiently proved to his wife that all distrust had been set aside amongst them, since he had become personally known to Millicent and Michael Forrester. The Squire and the dame treated him with sedulous care, that he might feel himself an honoured guest ; and uncle Christopher and cousin Tom Martineau found his society a most acceptable relief to their own. Everybody petted Pennie, and made a point of assuring her how much they liked him, and of commending her courage and pertinacity in standing by her own opinion when nearly all the rest of the world was against her. And everybody had a word to add in his or her own excuse, for having so long con-

demned him unheard. The sum of all these pleas was ignorance. "If we had only known him, if we had only seen him, as we see and know him now, we should never have believed him for a moment to be a guilty man."

Pennie's eyes used to fill as she listened to these tardy amends, and to say that she was sure the world would do her dear Arthur right at last. Mr. Tindal did not hear any of the talk over his troubles, but he felt that the familiar shadow of dislike and dread was withdrawn. Still, however, by habit he met the cordiality of his entertainers with distance. But it was a distance that would decrease; for his nature was decidedly more sociable than solitary, more genial than ascetic, more forgiving than vindictive. When he and Pennie returned to Rood he declared that he was glad,—glad and grateful to find himself at home again with only his wife; but Pennie persuaded him into an admission that it was good to look forward, and not backward, and to take freely the helping hands stretched out to them.

When the squires and dames of Eskdale heard where Mr. Tindal and his wife had been visiting,

their own difficulty diminished. It was felt that they had taken out their diploma as honourable members of society, and that there need be no more anxiety or hesitation as to associating with them, whether on formal or on familiar terms. Some who had hitherto held aloof now came forward. Mr. Tindal was invited to subscribe to the Eskdale Hunt, and was asked to join the Yeomanry. To the first proposal he acceded ; the second he declined. Even old Mr. Curtis of Methley Towers made advances to the master of Rood, and Lady Brooke said publicly, at her father's table, that it had always been *her* opinion that Arthur Tindal had been shamefully traduced and persecuted.

Before the cold weather was over there were not many Eskdale houses in which Mr. Tindal and Pennie had not been welcomed, and not many diners-out who had not accepted the opportunity of renewing their long intermitted acquaintance with the hospitalities of the Abbey. Mrs. Tindal was allowed by general consent to be a nice woman, and Mr. Tindal to be a good fellow, hardly dealt with, who had shown wonderful pluck. He and Pennie soon understood

that their future life was in their own hands, and that they might make it very much what they chose. Before summer came again they had a common reason for making it as much as possible like the lives of their neighbours. Exactly a year and a day after their marriage, the church-bells rang again, for the birth of an heir to Rood, and Arthur Tindal, thanking God for his son, promised Pennie so bravely to bear himself henceforth before the world, that the blot on his name, though it should never be perfectly effaced by earthly judgment, might not descend to their child, or ever become a haunting knowledge and doubt with him, through his father's voluntary seclusion from a society that was seeking to repair a great error by welcoming him with open arms at last.

IV.

A HEART CAUGHT AT THE REBOUND.

THE only visible consequence of Anna Wynyard's disappointment was that she began to conform herself more to the ways of the world in Norminster; to accept its pleasures, to share its ambitions, and to study its leaders. Mrs. Lefevre called on Mrs. Wynyard when her daughter's engagement was arranged, and the two families became intimate. There was even a proposition that Anna and Lois should share with Jean and Philip's three sisters the office of bridesmaids on the occasion of the wedding; but Mrs. Wynyard declined it on account of their mourning.

Mrs. Lefevre was of the highest consideration in Norminster society, and it was felt to be a great advantage to Anna Wynyard to be first introduced

at her quiet evenings in the Minster yard, where there were tea and whist, a little good music, a little good singing, and an early departure. Anna preferred the manner of these evenings to anything else that went on that winter. For balls she professed to have no desire ; for dancing no taste. In fact, she was a girl with a girl's charming frivolities left out, and all the serious calm proprieties of mature age fitted in to supply the blank. The Ferguson girls had not the *entrée* of Mrs. Lefevre's drawing-room ; Mr. Clarkson's wealth had not opened to him her exclusive doors ; Mr. Scrope was welcome there, for, though poor as a mouse of the church he served, he was talented, fine-looking, and a gentleman. Dr. Philip Raymond was a general favourite in the house, and the Earl of Eden was quite one of the family. Rumour had whispered many times that he was to marry the gay and gracious widow ; but neither had ever any thought of it. Besides being his cousin, Mrs. Lefevre was ten or twelve years the earl's senior. Their friendship dated from his boyhood, and was more that of sage sister and wayward brother than anything else.

They had been brought up under the same roof, and had never allowed their natural affection to waste through disuse.

Mrs. Lefevre's rooms were small, but elegant, and always well supplied with novelties to make conversation about. People came together there easily and got on easily. Nobody took airs. The distinction of visiting intimately at that house levelled all other distinctions. One frequent guest was Miss Brotherton, a woman imperially handsome, dark-browed, and rich-voiced, the daughter of a great musician, herself a teacher of singing. Another was a short, thick, ugly man, whose pictures were world-renowned, and whose talk was very diverting. Birth, talent, or a million are the usual passports into society. Mrs. Lefevre did not care for the million. She was wont to say that unless men were of very high dignity, or very high mind, wealth vulgarised them — especially new wealth. Purse-pride she utterly contemned; graceful poverty was always a plea for her favour.

She heard the story of Eastwold, and was touched. She declared herself a warm partisan of

that *odd* Penelope and Mr. Tindal. She saw Anna Wynyard, admired her serene perfections, and determined to bring her forward in her best light. Jean was yet too young, and she enjoyed having a girl to plan and cater for. Anna looked also as if she might do her credit. She had a turn for solid studies, and Mrs. Lefevre set her cousin, the earl, who also had a turn for solid studies, to make her acquaintance on a geological foundation. They progressed at a rapid rate, and one morning in January, Anna was taken to the earl's dusty old mansion on the cold north side of the Minster to view his cabinet of specimens—all, as he told her, collected, arranged, and labelled by himself.

The earl was a tall, thin, angular man, very nervous, and shy by fits and starts, but worthy, generous, and much more sensible than he got credit for being. His father had been awfully wild and extravagant, and had left him only the ghost and name of rank, without enough means to support even those unsubstantial nothings; but by thrifty management, his property had been since so far redeemed that his circumstances were now suffi-

ciently easy. His sisterly cousin had preached to him for several years past the expediency of marriage—marriage with a good, handsome, amiable young woman, who would give him an heir, and look the countess on the very rare occasions when his wife might be required to do something more than play homely Joan to his homelier Darby. Such a young woman Mrs. Lefevre believed she had discovered in Anna Wynyard, to whom, in her opinion, no man under forty was likely to take a tender fancy. She belonged to the old gentry. Put her on a velvet dress and diamonds, and she would do honour to the peerage. Put her on comfortable linsey, and she would dust specimens all day, and at night appear as a very fair, docile, kind wife by his dull philosopher's fireside.

When she had composed her little domestic drama, Mrs. Lefevre became quite impatient for the *mise en scène*. Her drawing-room had a bay window, supported on flying buttresses, which commanded a three-sided view of the Minster yard. The earl was very partial to that window of an afternoon. Notwithstanding his turn for solid studies, he could

relish a chapter in contemporary social history, and was by no means above taking an interest in his neighbours. That pretty window, luxuriously cushioned round, gave a view of the Deanery Porch, and the Residence Gate, and of the paths traversing the grass by which the members of those dignified ecclesiastical households went to prayers. Nothing was more common in the course of the day's events than for the earl to come upstairs about four o'clock, and take quiet possession of his favourite corner, whether Mrs. Lefevre was at home or not. Thence, long before Anna Wynyard became intimate in that house, he had taken notice of her wise, effective way of walking in a high wind, and had pointed her out for admiration to his cousin. There was an open paved space within range of the window, in vulgar, popular parlance known as "Leg Fair." The Ferguson girls, who had pretty limbs and wore neat boots, were ill-naturedly said never to lose an opportunity of crossing it on a Sunday, when the March breezes were at play; but then the grand, gaunt Martin girls crossed it too, and the wind made quite as free with their slender

“drumsticks,” as with the tidy, agile “scarlet runners” of the others. The fact was, it gave the shortest cut to the Minster for those coming up Eastgate from Briggate, and Anna and Lois Wynyard avoided it no more than their fellow dwellers in that suburb; only they managed the passage more modestly—perhaps because they had learnt to circumvent the vagaries of whirling, frolicsome winds on the Eskdale moors.

One very wild day, about a week after Anna's inspection of the cabinets, Mrs. Lefevre kept the house, and Jean with her. The Earl came in the afternoon at his usual hour; shuddered, said the cold was bitter, stinging; the hearth was the only comfortable place in such weather: who would go out that could help it?

Jean was in the window at work on a wonderful achievement in scarlet, blue, and white wool,—nice warm work for the season,—and taking up the word, she said: “Anna Wynyard does not care for weather. She never misses the anthem on Wednesday, let it rain, snow, blow as it will. There she comes now, drifting round the corner!”

The Earl stepped aside from the rug to look ; watched the black, veiled figure vanish within the Minster walls, and then drew a chair to the fire, and sat himself down, observing that some pleasures were enhanced, he supposed, by pain undergone to get at them. After a minute's reflection, he asked,—“ Will that girl walk home alone after prayers, as she came ? ” Neither Mrs. Lefevre nor Jean could tell him ; but his cousin thought it not improbable. To her surprise, he immediately added, “ I shall go and see.” And forthwith he got up and went.

They were chanting the psalms as he entered the choir from the west transept ; almost concluding them, and he waved away the obsequious verger, who would have conducted him to a stall, and stayed by the door. There was a solitary figure standing near the altar, where the light was very dim, which he believed to be Anna ; and just before the anthem began, a lad passed him softly, went up the steps, and joined her. It was Maurice, poor fellow, who sacrificed himself many a piercing afternoon, when school was over, to come here for the purpose of escorting his sister home. He did not often grumble,

but to-day, as they were hurrying out at the close of the service, the Earl overheard him say,—“I do think, Anna, Wednesday is always the worst day in the week.”

“I am so sorry, Maurice, but it is my greatest happiness to hear the singing in church,” replied she.

The Earl repeated to himself, “Her greatest happiness to hear the singing in church;” and turning in a contrary direction to that which they had taken, he returned to his own house.

On the following Saturday Mrs. Lefevre gave a musical evening. On musical evenings there was quite as much conversation as music; but then the name of the thing limited expectation, and promised selectness. The Earl of Eden was there, and so also was Anna—the only two invited who did not profess to contribute to the entertainment. It happened that she had a corner seat in the window, and that the Earl had the corner opposite to her. A small stand of flowers filled the centre compartment between them. Besides Anna, on the same settee was the younger Miss Martin, very magnificent in pink silk and blond

flounces, which flowed over Anna's black dress, and almost concealed her. Anna did not care so long as her ears were not stopped.

The musical evening began with a duet sung by the elder Miss Martin and her elegant brother, and went on with a rather heavy capriccio, performed by the same lady alone, during which a hum and buzz of tongues animated the room. When that was over, the younger Miss Martin executed a piece with marvellous celerity, and gave up just as those who did not know it thought it was about time she came to the air. Turning afterwards towards her former place, scattering smiling, bowing acknowledgments of compliment, she saw that the Earl had moved, and possessed himself of her seat by Anna. It was a position which gave its occupant command of the whole room, and she was reluctant to give it up; but after a momentary halt, which anybody a degree less absent than the intruder would have understood, she dropped into his vacated corner, and with an indignant glance across the flowers at the unconscious Anna, composed herself as favourably for observation as circumstances would allow.

She saw more, much more, than she expected. Anna appeared quite at her ease with the eccentric recluse, whom hardly anybody knew, and he was positively trying to talk to her—*he*, the most taciturn of men, who was credibly stated never to speak to any lady but Mrs. Lefevre. What an effort he had been obliged to make to conquer the nervous shyness that always tied his tongue in society, she was not aware of, though perhaps Anna was, for she made her answers purposely soft and encouraging.

“ You have a passion for music ? ” began he.

“ I like it for the mental rest and pleasure it gives me,” replied she.

“ Is not that a sensual way of regarding so divine an art ? ” said Miss Martin from the corner.

The Earl started as if he were shot, stared at her, fidgeted and muttered : “ Who is she ? ” while Anna glided calmly into the discussion Miss Martin volunteered, and amazed that experienced Norminster *belle*, by the serene, self-possessed assurance with which she maintained her right not to care for any music, however classical, however fashionable, that did not minister exhilaration or soothing to something beyond the ear.

“ Yes, yes, I understand, I see,” quoth the Earl suddenly and aloud. “ Music that floats you above itself—carries you into dreamland. It is in the winds oftener than anywhere; in the winds at night. Poets hear it, I daresay—and like it. I don’t. It is like a dirge round the Minster, and keeps me awake.”

Two or three faces turned that way surprised and attentive at the very unusual sound of Earl Eden’s abrupt voice, and incoherent sentences, and saw Anna colouring, and Miss Martin constrainedly suppressing a smile. Mr. Scrope caught Anna’s eye, and drew a step nearer, but the length of the Earl’s legs, and his attitude altogether, cut her off from approach or extrication unless he were distinctly requested to move out of the way, and let her pass—which would have made more fuss than was convenient when another song was on the point of beginning. This time the singer was Miss Brotherton whose performance was delayed until the last, on the principle of holding the best in reserve.

“ I want to listen to this,” whispered Anna to the Earl.

He nodded confidentially, leant back with a pro-

digious sigh, dropt his chin on his breast, and listened too. When the song ceased perhaps everybody was relieved. It was the cry of the Foolish Virgins at the Bridegroom's door. "Oh! let us in that we may see the light!" and the Christ's voice answering, "Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now!" Miss Brotherton had splendid dramatic power; she realized the scene, and felt it; her voice thrilled with awful anguish as she pleaded—with still more awful doom as she replied. Anna's flesh crept, and her heart throbbed heavily, painfully.

"It ought not to be sung in a flutter of idle company," muttered the Earl.

After a solemnized moment, a general conversation broke out, people moved to and fro, sipped coffee, and recovered their natural warm tone of polite indifference. Anna could not deliver herself from the impression so soon. She would have made an excellent mediæval devotee. Nature would not have been too strong for her; grace would have won an easy triumph. If there had been an open convent-door at hand to-night, she might have been tempted to walk in, to confess her sins, to light her lamp, and

nourish a weak flame for the remainder of a recluse, airless life of peace and security.

“ You made Anna Wynyard your prisoner last night, Godfrey ; I hope she found you amusing,” Mrs. Lefevre said to her cousin, when they met the next day.

“ Made her my prisoner ! ” echoed the Earl bewildered.

“ Yes ; kept her to yourself in the window ; gave no one else a chance of speaking to her.”

“ You know how absent I am, Julia, you should have warned me at the time. Who wanted to speak to her ? She made no sign of wishing to be anywhere but where she was.”

“ Perhaps she did not. If you don’t mind my reverting to my old office of advising you, I have something to say.”

The Earl looked at her and shook his head. “ Say on. I know what you are coming to, but it is of no use.”

Mrs. Lefevre chose to pass over both gesture and assertion, and to plunge straight at her point, as if

they had never been made. "If you know what I am coming to, it will be no shock to hear that Anna Wynyard is the very woman I have been longing to find; the very woman to suit you for a wife; and that I have set my heart on your marrying her."

He shook his head again, but as she thought, less decisively. "My dear Julia, she is young enough to be my daughter!"

"My dear Godfrey, she is sage and sensible enough to be your mother! She is ten good years graver than her age. She is not a girl in her ways—and I am quite sure she likes you."

"She may have a kind soul, and may pity me, but I doubt the *liking*, Julia. She will fall in love with some gay, airy, young fellow such as Mabel's husband, and she had much better do that than—*like* me."

"Don't be sarcastic, Godfrey. There are some girls to whom gay, airy, young fellows never take, and she is one of them. Let that be encouragement for you. *I know*. She has not the sunny fascination of my girls, but she has great beauty; she has temper, sense, patience, principle—and I believe she would develope a deep and tender devotedness in married

life. She has motherly instincts, and would take care of you as well as I have done. I cannot live for ever, Godfrey, and think how lonely you are when I am only for a little while away. I should be twice as happy if she were your wife—*she*, or some one as nearly as possible like her.”

“I do not believe there is another like her anywhere—nice, placid thing,” muttered the Earl reflectively.

Mrs. Lefevre saw that her suggestion had penetrated deeper than any former suggestion had ever done, and judging it expedient to let it work in his mind quietly, she said no more at that moment, but determined to seek an opportunity of sifting Anna for the purpose of discovering how she stood affected towards the common end and aim of a woman's life. She really meant to be kind, and to make two rather isolated people happy if they would let her.

The opportunity of learning Anna's sentiments was not long retarded. Mrs. Lefevre chanced to call on Mrs. Wynyard one afternoon when Bell and Minnie Ferguson were with Anna, giving her an account of a marriage that had just taken place at

Nice between a young Norminster lady who had gone thither for her health, and a famous old *sarant*; a baronet, and member of a dozen scientific societies.

“ I am *so* amazed ; I could not have believed Lucy Hutchinson would marry for a name and a position,” said Bell, indignant for her whole sex, when the story had been detailed in full.

“ But perhaps she has married Sir Patrick Stewart because she likes him,” suggested Anna. Mrs. Lefevre was conversing with Mrs. Wynyard at the opposite side of the room, but she lent an ear to the girls’ talk as well.

“ Like him ! ” ejaculated Minnie. “ He has daughters older than herself, and married. And besides we happen to know who she really *did* like ” (sinking her voice), “ *Mr. Scrope*—but he never cared for her a bit.”

“ Then I don’t blame her,” said Anna with an audible, unconscious sigh. “ She missed love where she sought for it, and so she took it where she found it. Perhaps she could not bear to live without, and thought any better than none.”

“ She always used to protest against a single life,

and to declare she had no vocation that way," rejoined Minnie; "but a loveless marriage must be, oh! out of all comparison, worse!"

"But how do you know hers is a loveless marriage? There is love and love," said Anna. "What do you know of Sir Patrick Stewart? From his portrait in one of his books printed last year, he is a very fine and kind-looking man—not so old either—perhaps sixty."

"And she is not twenty-six. I cannot think it right. No, I cannot. It may be very delightful to be called 'My Lady,' to have a house in London, and the society of clever men, but I should not like to pay her price for it." Thus far Minnie; then Bell.

"I can fancy her turning all the old greybeards' heads. You do not know her, Anna, but she is graceful and nice to look at—what people call 'interesting.' She can talk well, for she is quite exceptionally cultivated, and she is sure to be popular. When her father was alive it used to be said that the Hutchinsons' house was the pleasantest in Norminster."

"What will Mr. Scrope think about it, I

wonder?" speculated Minnie. "She was not fit for a poor curate's wife, even if he had liked her. Poor Lucy, let us all wish her good luck with her old Sir Patrick!"

Anna felt there was a dash of envy in this blessing, and she thought her own thoughts about it. She had begun to consider of the world no longer as a place where hopes are to come true, and visions are to be realized, but as a place to be made the best of patiently; where one should strive to be as happy as one may, if one cannot be as happy as one would. A favourable disposition this for Mrs. Lefevre to work out her scheme upon.

Anna had ambition within certain limits, and this was her present life:—To rise in the morning and study hard three hours with a view to that dreary possibility which her mother had put before her at Eskford; to walk with Lois and their governess at noon; to dine early; to pay a call or receive a call; to go to Minster prayers; to return to kettle-drum; and to study again until bed-time, except in the rare event of spending an evening out. She could bear

it; she could go on with it, and make no audible murmur, but she had a secret longing for a larger, fuller, busier life. She knew she would never a second time experience that exaltation of feeling which had possessed her for her cousin Philip, but she had no inclination to live all her days mourning because that was gone. The sun shines in other months besides May.

She never could remember afterwards at what precise moment she became aware that Mrs. Lefevre was endeavouring to arrange her life for her much as she would have it; but when she comprehended her plan, she tacitly acquiesced in it as good, and let her work to bring it to pass without let or hindrance. She met the earl continually at his cousin's house, and without demonstration or effort followed her lead in entertaining him. She read up geology at home until she could talk it easily and unaffectedly. She discovered that the earl had a taste for archæological researches, and she gave her mind to those dusty strata of learning with quite honest interest. Presently he opened a new view which she enjoyed for itself—a view of the annals of the ancient house of Eden, con-

cerning which he had masses of documents, of diaries and letters, illustrative of the most fascinating periods of English History. Anna loved old family chronicles. The Eastwold traditions of the great civil war, in which the Wynyards took the loyal side, and suffered grievously, were very full. One of her labours during the last year at home had been to draw out and illuminate a genealogical stemma of her family. Twice, from the old records she followed, it appeared that the house of Eden and Eastwold had intermarried—a precedent which, being dexterously brought under the earl's notice by his cousin, stimulated his courage, and precipitated the event she desired to see.

When the earl spoke, Anna was not taken by surprise. She had the example of her progenitors before her, and she affected no difficulty about imitating it. When the engagement was concluded, and ratified by her mother's consent, it appeared to her as if this was what she must all her dull life have been growing and drifting up to.

It would be a long story to tell how Anna's kinsfolk and friends marvelled and moralized over

her lot. At Eskford and at Brackenfield, where her character was known, there was no doubt but that, as she had chosen it deliberately, so she would wear it contentedly. Her mother was satisfied. The earl might be eccentric, nervous, reclusive, and poor, but he was an honest gentleman, and would give her a refined and sufficient home. Her brothers, Geoffrey and Maurice, were amused that Anna, tiresome Anna, should achieve such rank and dignity; and Lois looked up to her for a startled moment as if she expected her to turn all at once into something lofty and unapproachable. But she went about prosy and placid as ever, and the Ferguson girls, who had been struck dumb and cautious at the first report of her conquest, reconciled themselves to it and to her, and allowed that she would become the position very creditably.

Not that the position promised to be much beyond her past experience, but there was the title—if she set store by a name. The earl did not propose to relinquish what he had hitherto treated as the first duty and object of his life. He meant still to live without spending that he might redeem the lands he

could not alienate, and pay the enormous debts he had inherited. Anna was made fully aware of this. But, prompted by his cousin, he did consent to remove from the gloomy cold mansion in the Minster yard to the Manor, another residence of his, just beyond Norgate, quite as ancient, but more cheerful, because the sun could get at it all round. It had an extensive garden going down to the river, and a paved quadrangle with lime-trees in it. Anna would never have suggested a change, but she was unfeignedly glad when she heard that it was to be made. The Manor, picturesque, and crowded with romantic associations, was a dwelling after her own heart. She said so, and made the earl as contented as herself.

Confidence and affection increased between the two, the more intimately they became acquainted. Mrs. Lefevre was perfectly satisfied with her day's work. The only persons who doubted whether such a match would be for the best were aunt Theodora, who was easily converted to the common opinion, and Mrs. Tindal, to whom Anna had written several joyous letters during her stay at Eskford, in which cousin Philip's name had recurred like the burthen

of a ballad, or the air of a rondo. A woman who has married the man she loves, is always anxious that other women should love the men they marry, and when Anna's engagement was notified to Pennie, in a long letter from Mrs. Wynyard, it gave her a pang to think that perhaps the poor girl had rushed into it as a refuge from disappointment. With the unexpected news, came an offer of a visit from her and Lois at Midsummer on their road to Brackenfield—an offer which Pennie accepted with satisfaction, as another sign of prejudice passing away from the minds of her friends.

V.

A QUIET INTERLUDE.

WHEN Anna and Lois Wynyard arrived at Rood Abbey on a brilliant June day, they found their old companion and almost sister on the watch for them, a proud and happy young mother, in possession of the prettiest baby in the world. The two girls were delighted with it and with her, and by-and-by with Mr. Tindal too; for he was very hospitable and amiable to them, and found them both ponies to ride out with himself and his wife.

Anna wished she might be as lucky as her father's ward had been. With the interest of an engaged young lady, she observed various little items of duty required by Mr. Tindal of his wife, which, with some complacency, she reflected, would by-and-

by be required of her. If he wrote a letter, he brought it to Pennie to read before sealing, even though he might have consulted her already as to what he was to say. Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone had completely revised their opinion of their patron, had made advances, and had suggested the restoration of the church which they had formerly discouraged. The work was now in progress; Mr. Tindal superintending every detail, which he thoroughly understood, but never failing to consult Pennie, though she hardly knew more of architecture than her shoe. What was to be done for the cottages, on the home-farm, in the garden, she was always invited to consider and decide; and but that she had thrown herself heart and soul into her new life, it seemed to Anna that she must often have wished her "Good Arthur," as she called him, had exercised a will and a way of his own.

Then, as touching her personal liberty, it was much curtailed. He was so anxious lest the wind should chill or the sun scorch her, that he tended and watched his tough little brown Pennie as if she were some delicate hot-house plant that an adverse blast or a parching ray might kill. Pennie would

not for the world have allowed herself in the thought that his tender precautions were tiresome or absurd, but she tried to mitigate his exaggerated care—tried the more diligently when Anna told her with the confidential familiarity of old days that it was funny to see the contrast between Pennie the docile wife, and Pennie the wilful ward.

Pennie the wife was a very short while in discerning that any misgivings she might have entertained about Anna's future were of no account. Anna began of her own accord to tell the tale of cousin Philip's wooing and wedding, and passed on to her own prospects with perfect composure.

"Godfrey is older than Mr. Tindal," said she, alluding to the Earl. "According to the peerage he is forty-two, and he has the air of being even more; but that comes from his having given up so much time to study. I shall be able to help in more ways than one. I quite enter into his feelings about the restoration of his family—it is almost a parallel case to our own; and oh, Pennie, I do hope I shall have children!"

Evidently there was nothing seriously wrong with

Anna's heart. She was eminently practical, and thoroughly well inclined towards her duty. And yet, poor soul, that beautiful vanished dream came dimly back, and haunted her night-thoughts; especially did it come back here, where she was constantly reminded of the pang of leaving Eastwold, and of the sweet, unexpected consolation she had met with at Eskford.

A little debate ensued on the second morning of their visit, as to whether Lois and she should or should not go over to Eastwold under existing circumstances. Finally it was carried in favour of going to see Jenny and Crabtree at the Lodge, and of going no further. Pennie considered even this a needless renewal of pain, and offered to send for the two old people to spend a day at the Abbey; but when this expedient was about to be adopted by Anna, Lois lifted up her voice and said, she had promised to go and see how all looked about their old home, that she might tell Maurice. It was more than a year since they left, and it seemed to these two romantic, imaginative young people as if it had already receded half a life-time away. Lois had

some expectation of finding ruins, begirt with ivy—perhaps owls hooting in the deserted chambers.

Of course, she found nothing of the sort—nothing but a dusty, faded propriety, watched over with conscientious care by Farmer Dykes' wife. The good woman went through the house with Lois alone, detailing how scrupulous she was to light fires in damp weather, and open windows on fine days. It all looked very empty and dreary. Anna was the wiser of the two who chose to sit on the door-steps in the sunshine with Pennie, talking over her own interesting affairs. Lois thought to herself with a vague regret that Anna was soon learning to forget her own people and her father's house; and that by-and-by, Eastwold would cease to be more than a tradition with any of them. Even she herself had now no wish to return to its dull, care-haunted solitude.

Crabtree was very deaf that morning and very cross, and poor Jenny was, as she said, almost *bedazed*, what with tending him, and what with surprise at seeing her young ladies so unexpectedly. She asked the same questions over and over again,

and maundered off after each one into a fresh recital of her last winter's cough and rheumatics, varied with sad allusions to "th' auld times." Anna listened with sweet patience, and responded with a ready kindness that was hardly sympathy, while Lois felt her heart so straightened that she could not say a word. They had brought the poor old servitors no gifts, and there was a perceptible shade of grieved disappointment in Jenny's face when they departed without any reference to flannel, at which she had been hinting all through her talk. Before winter came again, however, her wants were well supplied from the clothing store of "Madam at Rood Abbey," as Pennie's title was with the poor of Rood parish.

She was a real blessing to them. Born in one rank, bred in another, and keeping up her intimacy with both, she had a natural understanding of various people's habits, prejudices and partialities. Her working neighbours rejoiced her mother's heart by praising her as having an open hand, and a right knowledge of things; and the rector and the rector's wife possessed in her an invaluable auxiliary. Pennie

had, in fact, fallen into a vocation that suited her, and being very happy in it, she was the better able to be the cause of happiness to others.

Sitting all out on the lawn that evening after dinner, Anna Wynyard said naïvely, "Oh, Pennie, I do wish mamma could see you now—see all of us; we look so comfortable."

Mr. Tindal glanced from Anna's face to his wife's, and listened for her reply.

"*Comfortable* is a good old-fashioned word, and expresses just what I feel," said Pennie. "What a beautiful sunset, and what a delicious balmy air! I am thoroughly comfortable, within and without, and these are such nice easy garden-chairs, Arthur." Then ensued a brief dissertation on the said chairs, of Allan Bridge construction, concluded by a promise from Mr. Tindal to present each of the girls with one to carry to Norminster.

"We have no garden at our lodgings, but they will be charming under the limes at the Manor House, Anna, will they not?" cried Lois.

Anna coloured slightly, and reminded Pennie that she had not yet shown her her wedding-gifts.

“I had none but what Arthur gave me, and he did not present his until after we were married,” said Pennie. “And they are much too magnificent for me to want.”

“Are they diamonds? Oh, you can wear diamonds—they suit dark people so well; much better than flowers,” responded Anna eagerly; and then she went off into a dress-talk very surprising to Pennie from her. Mr. Tindal lit his pipe, and strolled down towards the river, leaving them to it; and Lois went off by permission to the nursery, to see the baby’s evening toilette for bed performed.

It has been often said that those men and women are the most fortunate who have no history. The present epoch at Rood Abbey was as quiet, eventless, and commonplace as it was possible for existence to be; as commonplace as the life at Mayfield, or the Vicarage, or the Grange, or any other house in Eskdale, that had no dark, unriddled mystery attached to its inmates. And to all appearance it seemed likely to continue so—Pennie and her husband, well-contented with it, did not care how long.

One morning while Anna and Lois Wynyard were still with them, they all rode up into Arkindale. The scene was much more bustling and prosperous about the mining-works than it had been on the former occasion of Pennie's visit with her mother, and the mining village was growing so rapidly that the church and little stone parsonage, where still lived and throve the Rev. James Burton and his cheerful wife Elizabeth, stood now almost in the midst of the cottages and gardens of their flock.

Mrs. Tindal asked if they might go over the works, and permission was readily accorded. Dixon, who had been forerunner and overseer for Mrs. Wynyard, held the same offices in the employment of the company that rented the mining property on the Eastwold estates, and recognizing Pennie as the lady who had visited the place with the rector, when its prospects were of the gloomiest, he said to her, "You find us beginning to look up in the world now, ma'am. We shall get on presently like a house o'fire."

The discovery of a rich vein of metal had opened this new era in Arkindale, and the completion of a

railway passing within half a mile of the smelting-houses, had provided a good market, easy of access, very shortly after the mines were leased to the company. Instead of a doubtful speculation, they had become almost at once an excellent property, and promised in the long run to redeem, and more than redeem, the losses incurred in their name. The luck of the place had changed the day it passed into fresh hands, the work-people were wont to say. And, indeed, the fact was so.

“I wonder whether we shall ever see dear old Eastwold in honour again !” said Lois to her sister as they rode back to the Abbey. Anna shook her head.

“Dykes says the house is ready to fall down ; literally to fall down, and as he has the land, he wants it to be reduced, and rebuilt as a farmstead. Half of it is of no use to him, and only trouble and expense to everybody. Look at the boys, how delighted Francis is with India and soldiering ; Geoffrey might have been born in a counting-house, and Maurice means to be a clergyman. None of them will ever go back to Eastwold to live. They

will be new shoots from a good old stock, but they will thrive best in new soil."

"How your feelings have changed, Anna! You were more sorry than any of us to go away."

"So I was, and I shall always love the name of the old home; but I do not wish to retrace the last year, or to feel again as I felt then. I believe now with uncle Philip, that life is a series of compensations."

"You are going to be married. Ah! Anna, you are very philosophical."

"I suppose it is my nature. Let us ride a little faster, or we shall be left behind. Is not Pennie happy? They might be lovers still, she and Mr. Tindal, they like to be by themselves so much."

Another morning the two girls went to Eskford attended by a groom, lunched, and rode back to the Abbey in the evening. The visit did Anna good—settled and dissipated some of her fancies. She had been rather afraid to go; she came away glad that she had gone, though quite unable to explain to herself why. A couple of days at Methley Towers, and a night with Dr. and Mrs. Brown at Eastwold

rectory completed the stay of the sisters at Eskdale. They went to Brackenfield in very good spirits, and Anna was received with affectionate respect becoming her dignity as bride elect of an Earl. She enjoyed it. Mrs. Wynyard and her daughter Jean were invited thither during their stay, and went; the Earl was invited also, but declined, as his cousin said he would.

“My dear, when you are married you will tame him,” she told Anna; “to try to drag him about now would only frighten him.”

Anna was discreet therefore, and let him abide in his seclusion, though she would have liked very much to have him at Brackenfield amongst her friends. She could forego that little triumph, however, rather than put him out of his quiet, shy ways, and make him uncomfortable; and thus she proved herself possessed of one unselfish virtue the more.

Their wedding took place without any display at St. Jude's Church in Norminster on a lovely morning in August. Mr. Tindal and Pennie were amongst the family group present at it, and Mrs. Croft remarked thereupon to her sister-in-law at the Grange: “Folks

must have given up thinking any harm of Mr. Tindal, or he'd never be asked to a wedding. God be thanked ! my dear little Pennie was wiser than all of us, an' she has her reward."

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VI.

CONCLUSION.

THE summer went on at Rood in a placid, sweet monotony. At Allan Bridge old Dr. Grey died, and at the Grange there was a wedding—Mr. and Mrs. Lister having given a reluctant consent, at last, to their son Dick's union with pretty Jessie Briggs.

The harvest passed, and the autumn was on the wane, when one day, Mrs. Featherstone said confidentially to Mrs. Tindal: "You remember that poor woman, Pierce's daughter, who was taken to Norminster asylum a few years ago? John had a letter from the chaplain yesterday telling him she was just dead."

"Dead, poor soul! A happy release for her!" replied Pennie looking much interested.

"There were no details—nothing further. I

thought you would like to know the little we had heard."

"Yes. I wonder where Pierce is—whether he is at Norminster still?"

"John would most likely find out for you by writing to the chaplain."

"Let me speak to Arthur about it first."

So Pennie spoke to her husband, telling him that Alice Pierce was dead. It was a long time since the subject had been even alluded to between them. Pennie had her baby in her lap at the time, designedly. Mr. Tindal did not immediately reply. He seemed to be absorbed in contemplation of his son's manœuvres, which were extremely active and springy. Pennie held his coral above his head, tinkling the silver bells, and he stretched up his hand, and kicked and crowed to get hold of it, all his body alive and laughing with the effort. When Mr. Tindal did speak, however, he showed that his wife's words had not fallen on deaf ears.

"Alice Pierce is dead, is she? Well, Pennie, if her death had happened three or four years ago, it might have spared us some sorrow. But it can do

nothing for us now, even though her father should confess his guilty knowledge ; for all is done, thanks to you. We have friends and acquaintance enough, and to spare."

"Don't be ungrateful, Arthur. People intend to be kind—look at baby."

"I see him—he bullies you dreadfully already. I shall have to take him in hand myself, or you will spoil him."

"Indeed, you will not, Arthur ! Spoil him ! as if it were possible to spoil him, the darling, darling, darling,"—a shower of kisses shed all over baby's soft face and neck, concluded the maternal rapture. "But, Arthur, what shall you do ? Shall you not seek out Pierce ?"

"My dear child, I should like to leave well alone. If his conscience move him, he will seek me."

Pennie put her face down over baby again, and did not soon lift it up. Mr. Tindal suspected tears. He gave her a kiss on the crown of her head, and left her—he could not bear tears. Pennie did not exactly know what she would have had him do, but she felt disappointed. She did not, however, mention the

matter again, and it seemed to be forgotten, when, about a week later, Mrs. Croft said to her daughter : “ Pennie, your uncle Lister’s been telling me that as he went through the Abbey plantation last night, he met Mr. Tindal’s old servant, Pierce, roaming about amongst the trees. It was late, and the moon was up : your uncle thought the poor old fellow seemed as if he were a bit touched in his wits.”

Pennie communicated this to her husband. She did not like the idea of Pierce lurking in the vicinity of the Abbey, especially if he betrayed any eccentricity of manner. Mr. Tindal agreed with her, and told the gardener to keep a look-out, and bring him word if he appeared again. The next morning the gardener reported that somebody had been in the plantation since the previous evening : the paths had been freshly laid down with gravel, some rain had fallen, and there were deep foot-tracks in every direction. Mr. Tindal bade the man keep watch the following night, and let him know what happened. The next report was that Pierce came when the moon was rising, that he seemed to have walked a long step, and to be tired, and that from his way of going to and fro, and rummaging

about amongst the bushes he was evidently in search of something. The watcher had not ventured near enough to observe him much, lest he should frighten him away.

Mr. Tindal had his private suspicions of what Pierce sought, but he did not mention them except to Pennie. He invited her to ride with him to Kirkgate after breakfast, and from the telegraph office there he despatched a message to the head of the police in London, asking that a detective officer might be immediately sent down to the Abbey in the guise of a guest. He arrived before bedtime—a dark, wet night it was; and the next morning appeared at breakfast, a clean-shaven, burly, silent personage, looking like a lawyer or other professional character well-to-do in the world. In the course of the day he walked all about the Abbey grounds with Mr. Tindal, admired the views and vistas, suggested clearings here and plantings there, inspected various trees, discussing their age and method of growth, and let the gardener overhear that he had a fine place of his own in Surrey, and that he prided himself much on his eye for landscape effects.

The moon did not rise until eleven o'clock that night. Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone dined at the Abbey, and when they took their departure, it was just beginning to peep. Mr. Cole, the stranger guest, on the plea that he could never sleep unless he took a turn in the fresh air, and a cigar before he went to bed, walked out with them. He presently returned through the conservatory, and when the household, all but the master, had retired, he passed into the gardens again by the same way, shod now with shoes of silence, and smoking, if any, a perfectly scentless and smokeless cigar. He took a walk down the lawn to the river and back again, keeping always in the shadow of the trees, until the faint click of the wicket gate into the plantations apprised him that the person whose proceedings he had come to investigate, had arrived on his nightly errand.

Pierce walked slowly, but without any uncertainty or hesitation, to the clump of yew-trees from behind which the shot had been fired that killed Hugh Tindal. Here he knelt down, and the detective within a few paces of him, though unable to see

what he did, heard the sound of some sawing instrument at work near the root of the trees, one of which he had, during his daylight survey, observed to be partially decayed. Every now and then, the stealthy workman stopt to rest, to stand up and straighten his cramped limbs. As the moon brightened, the detective could see his shadow projected beyond the shadow of the trees upon the grass. He never paused long from his task, but he paused very often before he finally gave it up exhausted. Then he went away slowly by the wicket, as he had come. The spy moved after him, noiseless as a shade, and when he had followed about fifty paces along the high-road, he saw the old man cross a stile into the fields leading up to the moors.

Returning then to the plantation, Cole knelt down where Pierce had knelt, and inspected the lower parts of the trees, as well as the imperfect light would allow. It was some time before he discovered on which the saw had been used, but at length some whitish dust directed him to that which was decaying. No doubt it was hollow, and had been used as a hiding-place for something, which the

seeker was now trying to recover. Satisfied that the quest had not yet succeeded, and that Pierce would return the next night — satisfied also that, meanwhile, whatever he sought was safe in its concealment; the detective betook himself through the conservatory again into the house, and found Mr. Tindal awaiting him in the breakfast-room, with which it communicated. After some talk, they agreed that Pierce should be allowed to accomplish his object, and that, if possible, he should be taken with the silent witness he was attempting to remove, in his possession.

The following morning there was hoar-frost on the grass, and nothing to challenge attention to the yew-trees from any one ignorant of what was going forward. But the sharp eye of Mr. Cole detected after a moment of daylight inspection, that Pierce was working to make a hole large enough to pass a hand through, and Mr. Tindal by striking the trunk discovered that it was hollow throughout.

Pennie, to whom the progress of events was faithfully communicated, would fain have called for axe and woodman to cut down the tree instanter;

but Cole had a professional pleasure in his work, and would not consent to risk spoiling it by over-haste. If Pierce were seized with the hidden thing in his possession, there would be a substantial proof that he had either put it there himself, or had been made the confidant of the hider. If it were discovered by any other person, it might be as impossible to connect it with him as it had been to bring home to his daughter the guilty deed of which Mr. Tindal had been so long defamed. Pennie, therefore, put a curb on her impatience, and Cole had a private interview with Mr. Featherstone, now a member of the Allan Bridge bench of magistrates, who granted him a warrant to apprehend Pierce.

The next night the detective watched again. The old servant came as before, and pursued his work. When he had been at it nearly an hour, Cole heard him give a long groan of fatigue and relief. He had evidently succeeded in his object; for, rising from his knees, he stepped into the moonlight, and seemed, by his attitude, engaged in examining what he had found. In a moment Cole was beside him, had laid a firm hand on his shoulder, and grasped his wrist.

Pierce startled, dropt his capture, which fell with the ringing sound of metal, while Cole said : " I want that buried treasure, my friend," and stooping with his hold still on the old man, he picked up what proved to be an elegant pistol. He had expected this.

Pierce was paralysed by the shock of his seizure. He could not speak, but he began to sob.

" Come, have a good heart. Right's right, and murder will out, you know," said Cole.

" It don't matter—she's dead now," gasped the miserable father, and he let the detective lead him to the house.

Mr. Featherstone was there, and a second magistrate, sitting in the library with Mr. Tindal. They had dined at the Abbey, and had stayed late, in anticipation of the event. When Pierce was brought in, his injured master, from the long habit of kindness for his old servant, bade him take a chair ; for his shaking limbs were hardly able to support him.

Tears were running down Pierce's lean and haggard cheeks, and, looking up pitifully at Mr. Tindal, he said : " Mr. Arthur, she was my own flesh and

blood! Mr. Hargrove swore to me she'd be found guilty and hanged, as sure as ever she was tried—and they could not have proved it against *you*. And as for Mr. Hugh, who made her what she was, he got no more than his deserts—no more than I'd have given him myself, if I'd know before for certain, that it was him had taken her away!" A thrill of passion convulsed the old man's features as he spoke, and rising to his feet, he struck out with his feeble right hand, as if he had his enemy before him there.

This was not the moment to preach a homily against the wild justice of revenge. Every one was more anxious to learn the facts of the tragedy, than to moralize upon it. They went into narrow compass, and Pierce seemed inclined to shorten his own torture by telling them without long questioning,

"That day Mr. Hugh was killed, Alice came to the back-door here, and asked for me. I shouldn't have known her, she was that changed; and she'd stained her face like a gipsy. She begged, and the Lord forgive, I said, I'd never give her a penny, nor a bite nor sup, if it was to save her from dying

in a ditch; and I shut the door upon her. It did not seem two minutes after, that she came back wild-like, and threw that,"—pointing to the pistol,—“down in the porch, where I'd gone out again to look which way she might take. She didn't speak a word, but she laughed, and was off before I could open my mouth. I picked up the pistol, and put it in my pocket, and just then somebody called to me from the garden to come; for Mr. Hugh was murdered. I never heard the shot at all; I had been that mazed with seeing the girl. After the search was over, I dropt the pistol into the hollow yew-tree. Mr. Arthur, I meant to tell the truth when she was gone—I did, indeed.”

“It is high time it was told, Pierce,” said Mr. Featherstone. “You are an old man. If you had died with it unrevealed, the shadow of a great crime might have descended to the children and children's children of an innocent man.”

The next day, to please his wife, the master of Rood gave orders for the removal of the group of yew-trees which were connected with so many

wretched memories. Millicent Forrester, who was staying at Methley Towers, had driven over with her two children to see Pennie's baby, and the two friends sat out under the verandah, in the rare pleasant warmth of a Saint Martin's summer noon, watching the work. The little Forresters were on the lawn with their nurse, assisting in high glee at the operations of the woodman, and shrieking with excitement and delight at each chop of the axe. Mr. Tindal was standing by with Cole and Mr. Featherstone, and as the last heavy, black mass heaved, and fell prone to the earth, he waved his hand gaily to his wife, and then walked up to where she sat with Millicent Forrester.

"I saw it all in a dream before we were married, Arthur! I saw it all in a dream before we were married!" exclaimed Pennie going forward to meet him.

"You dear little superstitious goose!"

"If you do not believe me, ask my mother, to whom I told it!"

Pennie always believed in her dream herself—believes in it to this day.

There is little more to be said. The *Norminster Gazette* took up the story of Hugh Tindal's death, where it had last left it off, and finished it with a wordy narrative of Pierce's arrest and confession, and of the finding of the pistol. It professed to see some unsatisfactory doubts and difficulties about the case still, but one or two sharp letters from Eskdale correspondents brought the sagacious editor to a better comprehension; he then made the *amende honorable* to Mr. Tindal, and sternly as public censor ought, blamed the dull, unenergetic rural magistracy for not soon discerning the real author of the crime, and exonerating the unfortunate master of Rood.

The majority of Mr. Tindal's friends and acquaintance declared that they had *always* suspected Pierce *could* have spoken if he *would*. Still, however, they felt a natural glow of generous pleasure in the thought that they had *acquitted* their brother-squire before he was *cleared*. Mrs. Croft cried for joy and thankfulness whenever she recurred to the event, and Mrs. Lister was glad of it for the credit of the family. In the life at the Abbey it made no difference

Only into Pennie's heart, it shed a fuller sense of satisfaction and repose. As for Mr. Tindal, it appeared to affect and interest him the least of anybody.

THE END.

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